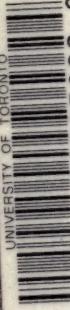
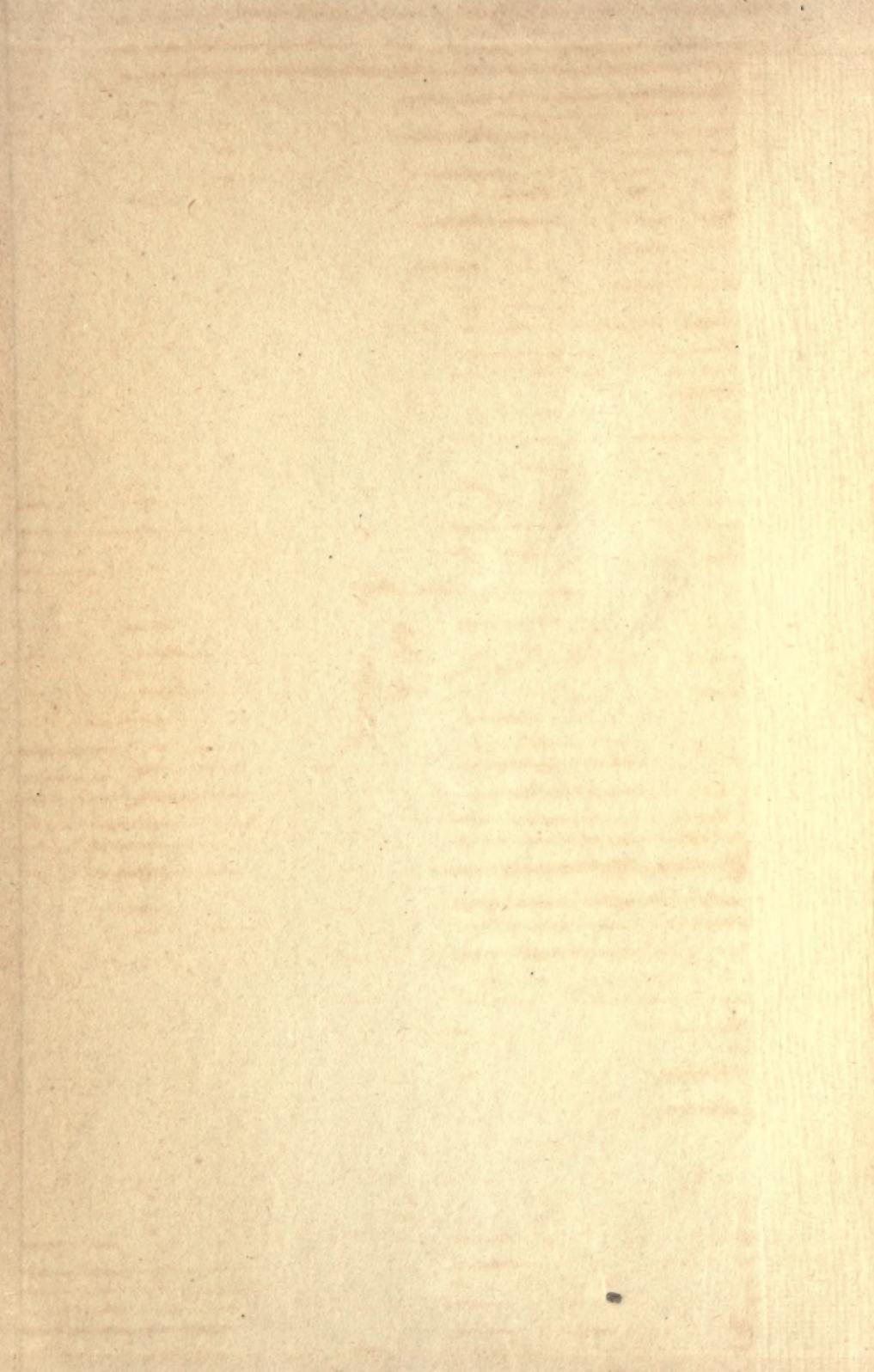


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THE HUNDRED AND ONE HARLEQUINS



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THE HUNDRED AND ONE HARLEQUINS

BY

SACHEVERELL SITWELL

LONDON  
GRANT RICHARDS LTD.

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TO  
ADA LEVERSON

## SERENADES

### I

**S**IGH soft, sigh softly,  
rain-thrilled leaves,  
let not your careless hands  
stem the gold wind !  
Let not your greensleeves  
swim in its breath,  
as water flowing ;  
lest your thin hands  
make gurgle down the crystal hills  
the gaudy sun's pavilions  
whence he distils those showered scents  
whose virtue all true turtles croon  
beneath their swaying palaces.  
Sing low, then, turtles,  
    Sigh soft, swift wind,  
    and, fountains, cease your flutings.  
    Melulla, now,  
    lean on your balcony ! look down !  
    My strings shall sing.

### II

**A**NSWER again you burning streams,  
Nor bend your flame, nor melt your snows,  
It is not only straw that burns  
To feel the hot sun look on it,  
And every phœnix is not dead.

### III

**O**PEN your window. Let the air flow in  
alive with waterfalls of flashing wings,  
so can your fever know a cooling touch  
and feel the feathers of my song as such.

Is all silent in your room ?  
Then come down among the dew-soft lawns,  
and if I knew the stairway for your feet  
should lie below it in the luscious grass  
and watch your coming, as one waits to feel  
cooler from showering of falls  
that play, like you, among the burning rocks.  
Then with fulness in my arms  
ripest weight down-bowed from trees  
to fall through sun's heat to the green  
laughing lawns more soft than water ;—  
full with ripeness, tasted, fired,  
I shall journey through the heat  
with my load of living fruit,  
and if I do not like the lawns  
can lay it on a yielding cloud  
whose proud battlements will melt  
and run, as water, at your burning touch.

#### IV

**I** SEE no breath upon the window's water,  
hear no feet below the shining trees ;  
must I never let the music slacken,  
fold its wings away, sink on my knees ?  
Will the leaves tremble till I know their tune  
in fiery praise of all the licking tongues  
that lap the crystal darkest night has laid  
to light her feet along the fickle walls  
unseen, but built again when daylight comes ?  
In between these trembling leaves  
and underneath the liquid light  
another harvest has its sheaves,  
the gold heads of the foam shine bright,  
waves, as houses built on cloud,  
crumble to nothing as they sail,  
the windows where you once were proud  
are raining water, fence and rail  
that latticed all the roads of sight  
are twisted rainbows, broken swords.

The way is open, where you lie,  
I see the clouds climb down the sky  
and lay you in the frothy waves  
that run to meet you, as your slaves.

V

LOW wind, soft light, and the crumbling waves  
lay down their fleeces at the mouth of caves ;  
the lion sands become clouds and beds,  
windows in the foam, cool roof for our heads.  
Here are new seconds in a moment's bliss  
to add a paradise to our kiss.  
The unicorns gallop over the sand  
to give the bird songs into my hand,  
they spread their wings and move their tongues,  
the leaves are lute-strings to their lungs,  
the clouds dissolve and shower-down, sharp,  
rain that the wind plucks as a harp ;  
the music bridges the shallow stream  
that cuts reality from this dream,  
to cross it, listen with keen ears ;  
this voice that sings shall ease your fears.

VI

THE trees are shaking down their gold,  
tumbling this homage from the sun,  
a gentle wind plays with the leaves  
and lies where he can watch the clouds ;  
he feels the green, and eats the fruit,  
quite near his youngest lambs begin  
to leap across the hills and climb  
until they frisk among the burning rocks  
and leave their wool upon the peaks.  
The shepherd jumps up, leaves the shade,  
and runs to rally his wide flock  
and knows their presence from these wisps  
and hears them bleating from the plain.

So I must start, and leave the trees  
and come down to the water's edge.  
The water rings are near the shore  
and when they break their silver chain,  
I'll hear the foam that sings the more  
it touches all that gives me pain.

## VII

**A**RE the caves cool with water  
that you sleep there hiding from the eager sun  
and make me wait an hour of slowness  
while I watch the sparks that run  
to kindle in among the leaves,  
the tongues of flame that leap this hour  
to sing more loudly than the seas  
before their waves can splash your tower ?  
If you are cool, I know the spray  
has reached you with its gentle rain,  
the cave you lie in, is alive  
with fiery tongues to please your brain ;  
those trembling strings cannot be blind,  
they are not sightless with their sound,  
they sing still sweeter till they find  
the crystal and the snow that wound.

## VIII

**I** LOSE my treasure bit by bit,  
it slides like sand and tells my wit  
the riches that I've stored for you  
are there to squander for us two.  
Then I will spend them till the fields  
glow in the gold my harvest yields,  
and when we've gathered, I will sow  
so you may lie to watch it grow.  
A second summer in one spring  
will fire our fancy, till a wing  
winnowing the windy air

will lift us on its feathers there.  
The clouds, whose battlements will melt  
to run as water, when they felt  
your burning touch, will open wide  
and show the sources of their pride.  
The gentle flowers, the hills of snow,  
the unicorns, the birds you know  
that sing out till you sleep and dream  
are now as living as they seem ;  
then go on sleeping, do not wake !  
Your wants I'll find, your thirst I'll slake.

## IX

**I** BURN with equal fires, not knowing my desires  
nor fear the bitter thrills, cool snow for burning hills,  
the dying from fulfilment ;  
and know what things my will meant  
in an image of white opening wings  
fanning softness, life that stings  
now blood runs in my watery veins  
flooding them with summer rains  
that fall to raise the gentle wind  
which fills a sail, in sleep you find  
the snows have melted from the hills  
that I can compass, keep from ills ;  
the lance I ride with is just right  
to pierce the fruit that shine so bright,  
dangling from the leaves that shake  
to lose the treasure that I take.  
The living pillars that I hold  
and guard with loving for their gold  
move their music as a beam  
drops from a cloud, and turns to steam,  
they melt their rapture into mine  
and fill each curve with tingling line  
until the sail fills and the air  
sings with each cloud and shouts out loud,  
the sun who combs his glittering hair  
from glassy ocean answers proud.

WHERE is the balm that hides the phoenix breast  
    who dies, but liveth by his wings so blest ;  
his gold sails furled, but fiery with the light,  
    his feathers molten in the hot sun's sight ?  
Pulseless heart, blind eyes, and breathless mouth,  
    dead to the waters that can cure his drouth.  
If I can find it, will swift blood again  
    spring in my fountains, strike my leaves like rain,  
cool white sails, fill the broad lake to its brink,  
    offer the thirsty melting snows for their drink ?  
His plumes are painted, but their power is gone,  
    lost are the treasures that my pride had won ;  
the phoenix floats among the flames, and breathes ;  
    may I, then, live again to cut the sheathes.  
To store your treasure till I try the taste  
    and know our feasting will not leave a waste.  
Now can I burn, and know the balm is true,  
    for flames but kindle, as the phoenix knew ;  
full of this spice he drifted into the sun  
    who lapped his feathers with fire, made the run  
of his raiment, plume on plume, into wings ;  
    the shortlived pleasure and the sleep that stings  
for renouncing it, these are the forging fire—  
    new wings for the phoenix ; and end to my ire.

## THE ITALIAN AIR

**I**N among the apple trees  
and on their echoing golden roofs,  
a singing shower rides on the breeze,  
and prints the grass with crystal hoofs.

The sighing music faints and fails  
among the far-off feathered boughs,  
the birds fold up their painted sails ;  
but voices sound, until they rouse

the sleeping birds and silent leaves ;  
and now a harp once more resounds,  
to utter what her heart believes  
and what her trembling sense confounds.

His daring loudness wakes the house  
that sleeps beneath a staring sun,  
the birds awake : the cattle browse :  
the page jumps down, begins to run

across the flower-beds ; now there rings  
another voice of sterner kind,  
the harp still sounds ; Figaro sings  
to ease his master's troubled mind.

Her thoughts now hold him in a net,  
he fills the meshes and respires,  
low boughs of fruit-trees, lush and wet,  
drop rain on him, while from the spires

a bell sets shaking every glass,  
rattles the windows in the trees,  
he strains the meshes, tries to pass,  
but now the bells die on the breeze.

This sudden stillness brings again  
the silence when his song was done,  
the notes that melted all her pain ;  
the sunset failing of the sun

robs the shadows of their gold,  
and as night darkens, he goes back,  
the bleating lambs are in the fold,  
and all the cattle walk the track

that leads along the grass to home,  
he steals among them through the gate ;  
they, within these walls, can roam ;  
but he is prisoned by hard Fate,

and led by chains within this yard  
whose frontiers are the barren walls,  
the windows of this house are barred,  
there sound no footsteps in its halls ;

when suddenly a light shines out,  
Figaro whispers from the sill,  
the subtle winds run forth and shout  
leaving their shelters on the hill ;

they drop from trees, come forth from caves  
and fill the valley with their noise,  
they sing like rivers, foam like waves,  
and roof this wanderer with the poise

of plumes that shut off light and drown  
hot words with soaring of loud wings,  
they screen the clamour of the town,  
and let him breathe the fire he brings

to fill his heart and touch with flame  
her fancy, as she hears the rungs  
upon the ladder creak his name  
and all the fountains flash their tongues.

They sing like birds and preen their feathers  
the nearer Cherubino goes  
the brighter burn their plumes in weathers  
far too fiery for the rose,

and climbing, he will comb his hair  
and trim his wings for further flight,  
will turn the currents in the air  
to make them watch this lovely sight ;

For she will draw him in her net  
until he reaches her high stage  
still painted with the fruit and wet,  
this bird will burst his brittle cage.

He will cross the broken bars  
and fly between the golden scales,  
his waving plumes will flash like stars,  
and cool the Heavens with their sails.

Now he rests upon the ledge  
preparing for this last short leap,  
before his newest wings can fledge.  
She leaps and saves him from the deep,

she draws him from those crystal fields  
still smelling of sweet juice and foam,  
he sinks with his last breath, and yields,  
her arm is strong to lift him home.

And now to mask the noisy night,  
to muffle words and mute the feet,  
Figaro strikes the strings, and bright  
the harp rings with its sudden beat :

Count Almaviva stirs in sleep  
and wakes to look out through the dark,  
he marks a bleating of the sheep,  
and, like the oars that push a bark,

he hears the strings that carry song  
and listens to the serenade,  
he little knew the grievous wrong  
that lurked behind the cloak it made.

For now the page unclosed his eyes,  
and kindled with the fire again,  
he saw, in front of him, the prize  
to solace all his long-lived pain.

Before the gift was in his hands  
there came a moment of fierce thrills,  
he smoothed down the soft yellow strands,  
and preened the music of his quills.

Just then a gentle rain began  
to fall among the apple trees,  
the harp played louder, and there ran  
a shiver and a sound of bees

as all the winds came home to rest  
and perched among the glittering boughs  
they shook each leaf, and turned its vest  
more gorgeous than the man who ploughs

will find the summer fields he reaps,  
for each leaf shook and showed the moon ;  
in cloudless sky and in the deeps  
a strength arose, a subtle boon.

For light shone in the room and showed  
more clear than any waterfall,  
the flame that burnt more where it snowed,  
until the fire hid with its pall,

a thick cocoon, the life within  
that smouldered, now to start afresh  
and break out from the senseless skin  
with ready wings and living flesh.

These silk-worms spin the sheathing cloth  
that lies about our limbs like sleep,  
it will not burn with flame, no moth  
can spoil the glow its colours keep ;

And they shall sew themselves some wings  
with silken feathers for the clouds  
to feel the speed their fancy brings  
as they will pass those drifting crowds

that wander, mob-like, on the road  
before a wind can herd them on,  
and where they saw a river flowed,  
or, looking for a lake, found one,

above the foam of waves, they float  
to sleep in softness, as of air  
while, with slow motion, like a boat,  
they glide on, and he smoothes her hair.

## FABLES

**W**HO taught the centaur first to drink  
Ladling his huge hands from the brink—  
When other monsters lie and lap  
The waters like a fruitful pap?—

The same who by ingenious ways  
Taught the chameleon his rays  
To take from leaves of tow'ring trees  
Strung thick with dew-bells that the bees  
Set ringing, till they bring the honey,  
Thrilled with music, gold with money  
Back to their castles in the clouds—  
And the chameleon, his crowds  
Of foes to fight with, has two eyes  
That travel sideways, no surprise  
On any side. He swiftly sees  
All—flowers, slow floating birds and bees.

The gentle, loving unicorn  
Will never eat the grass—  
All bushes have too many thorns,  
Their leaves are made of brass.  
His horn is given him to take  
The soft fruit from the trees.  
“Please grasp my horn and roughly shake,  
O nymph, among those leaves;  
This pear transfix'd upon my horn;  
I cannot reach”—beyond the brim;  
Clutched at; she misses; it has gone.  
“Alas! You've got it!” “I can't swim.”

To comb a satyr's silken beard  
Arabian travellers aspire,  
They beg, they bribe; more loved than feared  
The satyr trots to take his hire—  
Fawning, he takes from outstretched hand  
Such fruit his eyes have sometimes seen

On swaying branches where the land  
Sighs in a soft wind and the green  
Leaves shake beneath the nightingale.  
Thus cajoled, they can reach his beard  
Where gums lie, gathered from the frail  
Flowers he feeds on, where no voice is heard.

## CHURCH AND STAGE

**T**ERRA feros partus immania monstra gigantas  
Edidit ausuros in Jovis ire domum,  
Beating the marble floor with well-drilled, giddy precision,  
The hosts of aspirants are on the safest road to Heaven.

De facto, or indeed, before they see  
The bubble of our pride above their head,  
The sound of far-surpassing seraph voices  
May raise you, for a moment only, with the dead.

And there you have the chance I so desire  
To hear the singing of the true elect  
Who celebrate, above our carnal hire—  
For friendship only—their most happy state.

The seraphs and the cherubim  
Are singing through the crystal leaves  
That guard the empty balconies  
And echo round the silent eaves.

The pagan halcyons confine  
Their soft-breathed flutings to the lifeless woods,  
That with their brittle arms entwine  
The zephyrs hiding from the gold-maned sun.

And hidden from the peeping eyes  
Of prostrate multitudes who pray,  
The famous vocalist outpours  
The song of nightingales at play.

Provincial daughters, every whim,  
As every caprice, gratified,  
Your chattering voices raise the hymn  
As a pure flower of thanksgiving

Outside, like tumbling acrobats  
On green-spread carpets who let fall  
Their weary limbs before the town,  
The fountain flashing through the tall

And agitated trees throw down  
The showering, scintillating plumes,  
As if, above the hollow town,  
Among the feeding flocks of clouds,

Great birds are clinging to the flowers  
Our feeble voices prosper in the air,  
In hopes of reaching the unshuttered light  
Behind which burns the molten god-like hair.

## VALSE ESTUDIANTINA

**A** wall of cactus guards the virgin sound—  
Dripping through the sword-edged leaves  
The wayward milking  
Of your mental stalactites  
On the strung bells of music,  
Arrests the moment,  
Petrifies the air.

As you trudge along the path  
Laid down before you,  
Counting all the trees  
Remembering the turnings  
Instead of resting on the wooden seats,  
You lie among the thistles in the sun.  
Your poor jangle spreads along the street,  
Filtering the voices of the passer-by,  
Embroidering the singing in the lines of wire,  
And masking as with histrionic aim  
The bird-sound of long-distance messages.  
Now with a practised hand  
The music-master will release the waltz  
That makes a difference in our lives.  
With one hand on the railing  
To feel the rings of sound,  
One might emphasise the vision—

Some are sitting under flame-touched trees  
Where the generous sun  
Has run the fierce green plumes  
Set quivering on the harp-strings of the boughs,  
Has run them to a fine fire of gold,  
Has quickened them,  
As islands cut the currents of the sea,  
To the full spun colour  
Of the floating jewels  
That part the wind's gold hair,  
And fill the ultimate sea  
With all its canopy of clouds,

And tents of quick blue hills  
With the new message of their incense-cells.

Beneath these trees  
The suffocated crowd extends  
Its troubled surface,  
Till toying with another figured shape  
The extreme couples lie among the grass.  
This tune brings evening ringing down  
On the well-decked windows of the day,  
And rising on their tired feet,  
Running the fingers through their flower-decked hair,  
They leave the vast arena of the band  
Moving on the tight-rope of the tune.

*Ring out, ring out now, ring out now,  
The blare of your hundred brass trumpets  
Shake the leaves down, shake the leaves down,  
Make the clouds dance like flowers in the wind.*

In the darkening room  
You sit beside the piano  
Where the music-master  
Stretches his shadow.  
As he moves his hands,  
In your mind ringing on its meals,  
The rightful tunes to play  
Are the sweet songs of birds,  
The yaps of dogs,  
Hot water tapping in the leaden pipes,—  
As a final consummation  
Father arriving by the evening train.

*From "THE HUNDRED AND ONE HARLEQUINS"*

I

A PRO'S LANDLADY

MRS. SERAPION knocks upon the door,  
The sun has risen from his couch upon the floor.  
"Mr. Grimaldi ! seven o'clock !"  
Above the foam of the sea he shows,  
And Harlequin jumps from his bed of snows,  
While Mrs. Serapion warns the block.  
He walks to the window where a tree grows in,  
Stirring the leaves that are green and thin.  
He shaves. He washes. And he combs his hair.

II

AT BREAKFAST

"A glass of milk as white as your hand,  
The foam of seas that lie on the land,  
Their grass runs swift in the wind like a wave ;  
A cup of this foam :—and then I crave  
Snow-bread that the hills have ground their gold to !"  
The cheap shepherdess replied,  
Her words still-born—dead drowned by the roar.  
A railway engine ran across the field  
Galloping like a swift horse down the rails.  
As it came quicker the window-panes rattled,  
The roof shook side to side : all its beams trembled,  
Thundering hoofs were upon us—glass chariots.

III

READING THE PAPER

THE second train he boarded with a paper,  
He hides behind it from his fellows,  
This bird-mask let him know the news,  
He sees, like they do, from the air.

There they ride, each person in the carriage,  
Each of them steering his cloud through the air.  
All that goes on in the world they gather.  
A visor to guard, and a mask to protect them.  
Now, with their speed the white mane flows loose.

#### IV

##### IN THE TRAIN

**I**N crystal chariots drawn by unicorns,  
As did old Fortunatus in his day :  
I can shine in loud streets with honour,  
Grip the gold reins and go just where I will :  
Ride from the town beneath an arch  
Whose bricks like honeycombs shall store my name  
Beside the river we will gallop.  
My rattling wheels outpace the drifting float  
Of leaves that whirl among the river's eddies  
As fell strong towns that glittered as my foes :—  
Down to where it minglest with the sea  
Fanning new freshness to the foaming waves.  
Just there my unicorns sniff in the salt,  
Worry the water with white trembling feet,  
Whinny their pleasure, and turn back again.

#### V

##### AT THE TAILOR'S

**G**RIMALDI never answered his tailor,  
He looked in the glass and was far too busy.  
“ Forgive the liberty, bend your elbow.  
Where do you want the outside pocket ? ”  
Such words and scissors are too worldly !  
What did God say when he ordered birds ?  
“ I insist on at least two coats a year  
And made of material that will not tear.  
They shall search the grass to find their food,  
Leaving a flash of light where they stood.

In case on their search they find some fruit  
They shall float in the air and have wings to suit.  
Crests I'll allow them as gay as flowers  
And plumes that gleam bright as jewels, even through showers.  
But I won't have them always calling My name,  
They must imitate man, and make him feel shame."

## VI

### ON THE TELEPHONE

**H**E crouched like a monster at the bottom of a pool,  
The glass pane showed him there huddled on his stool :  
The jangling sledges that he overheard  
On snow more sleek than the feathers of a bird  
Glided along behind high-stepping horses,  
And the voice of Madame Hanska rang loud in the pauses.  
The man who wrote novels and had such queer manners  
Liked a fierce polonaise with its proud flying banners ;  
If he could have heard the noise down these cold wires  
I think he'd grow tired of a tune that perspires :  
The tinkling pagodas of coloratura  
With bells of harmonic glass, sweeter, far purer,  
Than all the cascades of sound rung by the clowns  
Who cool with their water-songs all the hot towns :  
The tenor who grates, and loud-sighing contralto  
Should sing from their barges beneath the Rialto :  
There they may stay, while the telephone carries  
The fur-footed dance of a person he marries.

## VII

### PORTRAIT OF MR. GEO. F. M. AIREY—A SECRETARY

**S**O many thousand portraits,  
Never yet has a Harlequin been taken  
As he sits inside a window at unruffled glass !  
He sits mouthing like a goldfish ;  
None of his words can creak out from the water.  
Cocked-hat like a peacock perking and prying,  
The window is his telescope and he's our admiral.

He will have the clouds here and there !  
The ships with big sails bear the brunt of the fighting.  
Wind will carry the lighter ships  
Round the enemies' wings towards the harbour town.  
The Harlequin crew run like lightning up the ropes,  
They sputter through the dashing waves  
And don't lose their colour.  
Wherever there is lighter wind and no curving waves  
They are standing in the windows of their blue-black caves.

## XI

### FROM A HILL-TOP

I SEE the ordered world,  
fast gurgling rivers and the slower falls  
gliding, like slow music, through gold plains.  
Look how the clouds dance  
Turning as each wave of the wind breaks !  
These waterfalls, these fiery snows,  
for music and for dancing ground ;  
here for their pleasure shall the tyrants tremble  
and tread this glistening lawn before their wives.  
While they slumber we will help ourselves.  
First to the fruit that lit each tree with fire,  
and then to the flames that flicker through these leaves.  
Take heed they burn not,  
while you sever, flame from smoke—  
but soon as they're parted, every tongue begins,  
they flicker and sing forth again,  
singing like loud stars the while they dance.

## THE HOCHZEIT OF HERCULES

AT the first sound of sun  
for which the leaves hold still their ears,  
I leave my bed and run  
forgetful of my years ;  
in summer when the birds sing louder  
I quickly reach the waterside  
and flash my muscles in the light,  
for the water soothes me  
and I like to break the waves  
that tease me as I cannot swim.  
I stand there as a statue, my reflex curved and bent below,  
while the green grass is laid for me to roll on  
and the tall trees clap their coloured wings  
hiding the fruits I love.  
I drop the chains, and lift my hands  
leaving this mirror for the sun,  
and run, all naked, to the horizontal bar,  
whereon I swing in unison  
to solar rules and lunar orderings.  
I swing back a moment, gain momentum,  
rise to the top, and ride my bar again.  
From here I see the ordered world  
fast gurgling rivers and the slower falls  
gliding like slow music down the hills,  
and listening, mark the many lutes  
played behind windows in the golt-lit trees,  
answered by fierce plucking of the strings  
from fields fingered by the wind :—  
then as the music drifts away to start  
the far-off machinery of sea,  
my hour arrives to dive into the dark  
and watch, head downward, the fire-plumed eyes  
that order all our happenings—  
upon this plateau now I stand  
fulfilling my first promise of giant strength,  
throwing great weights across a belt of sea,  
or buffeting the clouds with closéd fists.  
Shall I shatter mountains as a house of glass  
and throw the shivering sea across my back,

would you like to see me with a load of Towns  
stepping on far islands to attain the sky ?  
Just as clear as my reflection I can see  
the imitations offered in your land,  
the strong man throwing pebbles for a bet  
and batting in the summer to a band,  
climbing little hills with crooked sticks  
instead of smashing them in fragments as I do,  
and swimming like tired rabbits in a pond,  
though this, I know, is more . . .  
There are twelve shadows in my foaming wake  
More lasting than my labours and more keen,  
they stand there stronger than the hills I shake  
and challenge all the splendour that has been.  
I have no patience with the men of brains  
who wear their armour to ward off my chains,  
the straining of my fetters gives me space,  
their steel is but a mirror to my face,  
their lovely treasures need a shield to keep,  
before I go to take them, and they weep ;  
the battery and cunning of my arm  
sounds louder than shrill trumpets to alarm.

Early in the morning all the bells began  
before the trees felt wind to fan  
white sails into a landlocked bay  
where the dead deep sea showed a cloudless day.

These ships had glided through the night  
to see the splendour, share the sight  
when Hercules, triumphant, rides  
with tigers and the crouching tides.

He has taken from fat kings  
their motor cars and diamond rings,  
the fountains tumble while they shine  
with running nectar, sacred wine.

The sailors jump in the surf, and swim,  
they need not do it—it's a whim—  
they climb on the pier, dripping, cold,  
and run to the nectar as if it were gold.

Hercules still is inside the church,  
while the brimming fountains glisten and sing,  
he joins in the service till the windows ring,  
the captains marshal their companies,  
extending to line the street ;  
glass chariots wait at the church door,  
the unicorns fidget their feet.

Now

down

the aisle  
he's walking  
in his  
five-league boots .

A flash

and

he's through  
the portal,  
posing there  
for the reporters.

They could not open the chariot,  
they drove with it, shut, behind crystal ;  
the coachman and the postillions  
had all they could do to move off.

They drove like a fireball falling down the sky,  
the unicorns galloped with them almost off the ground  
the wheels and the windows flashed their fire.

Who can say what the fountain thought  
when they dashed round a corner

splashing right through its spray ?

Down the Marina, by the side of the sea,

they stopped for a moment to receive an address.

Hercules stepped out of his chariot

and then assisted his bride to get down.

He held in his hand the casket they gave him,

the golden key, and the message on vellum :

cries of "Speech" . . . "Speech" . . .

Such a crowd, and such shouting,  
they were none of them silent.

When he spoke it was like a concerto for piano  
played by a student with the orchestra too big.  
We could just hear . . .

“Remember I am not a thinker . . . plain soldier,  
simple, and . . . read or write . . .  
. . . Please . . . declare open . . . with pleasure . . .  
. . . I shall have . . . thankfully . . .  
. . . sure I shall never forget. . . .”

“Good-bye,” into the chariot and off again.

All round the town, up and down the avenues,  
constantly appearing at the end of views :  
with military bands in every square  
keeping up the awnings and doing their share,  
till now, at last, they reach the courtyard of the Palace,  
in front of them the sea that's live with fishing boat and pinnace.  
For by now the sailors having tasted nectar  
row to their ships again and sail out to sea,  
they tack near the terraces, and look for Hercules  
finishing his banquet in a gallery of glass ;  
they throw rope-ladders and they climb up through the pilasters  
leaning on the battlements like pinnacles of Heaven ;  
down in the banquet-hall they see their hero  
hurrying through his dinner so that he may join them.

Now that the wedding, the procession, and the banquet,  
all are finished, he is free to end the day  
exhibiting his strength before the city and the bay.

First he breaks an iron bar,  
snapping it to fragments,  
then he takes a tree and shakes it  
like a baby's rattle till its roots leave the ground ;  
he stands in a little stream  
damming its current  
till the waters well up high and shake themselves like lions ;  
now when they're fierce enough  
he steps aside :  
out they come, rolling, running,  
leaping over the heads of the other,  
salt, weaker waves ;

the boats in the bay ride over them,  
jumping their own horses in the rolling fields of sea ;  
they pass the vessels and they fall upon an island,  
surge over the rocks  
with their streaming manes in the wind.

By this time Hercules hides behind a hill,  
and the sun is also hidden  
behind dark windows in the glass-clear sea.  
Hercules is back in his bedroom,  
he sleeps with arms akimbo and a sword by his side,  
 lulled by the songs his wife sings softly ;  
he stirs at a sentrie's tread,  
and wakes when his unicorns whinny from their stables.  
But the horses of the sun have already left their stalls :  
they stand in the chariot traces  
trembling cold in the early wind  
that runs round shaking all the bells upon the trees.  
The sun comes down the steps out of his house  
looking at the clouds  
to choose the road he'll take among them,  
then he climbs into the chariot and they rattle up the sky—  
while Hercules is sleeping, lulled by music, far below.

## ET IN ARCADIA, OMNES

(From, "The Bird-Actors")

THE stars, but prophets call them sons of God,  
Lay in the fresh field, and the cool wind trod,  
Striding, across the bodies where they slept  
And woke them to the glory that they kept  
All day in bondage until darkness came,  
When movement flowed as water, gold as flame.

The gods now rise and let the new light run  
Rippling its quick strong life and substance spun  
From fluttering wings and fiery breasts of clouds  
Along their limbs just risen from the shrouds  
Of death-like slumber till they play again ;  
Blue hills, far islands watch them, and the plain.

Above white clouds the stars come from their tent  
On which to-day's dead light spills lustre, spent,  
And feeble after fiery beams and bars  
Have burned the sea with madness, earth with wars,  
And made still waters mirror in their glass  
The gold hung woods, and gliding clouds that pass,  
Dip their tall towers like pennons in the lake  
When, hidden from the sun, their thirst they slake  
Till, at the time the nightingales begin,  
The clouds have vanished, and the night is thin.

Now at their settled stations in the sky  
The stars are still, or spread their wings to fly,  
Are motionless, or moving with their gold  
Through Heavens wide as water, and as cold.  
Looking between sharp edges of the leaves  
Beneath black-shadowed houses, and their eaves  
Still shining in the evening rain, there show  
Unfolding flowers that tremble as they grow,  
And several ships with glittering sails of glass  
Swim the blue seas, or float beneath the mass

Of towering cliffs down which the gold men leap,  
Cross the wide sands, run down the shelving steep,  
Ride on the foam, and climb the golden ropes  
Until the soft-breathed wind fulfil their hopes.

Now that the sky is once more set with signs  
From balconies above a tree that shines  
With fan-like agitation of the wind  
Revolving its lush petals till they bind  
Their spinning dance into a formless round,  
The people lean and listen to the sound  
Of voices parting the dim green, and strings  
That wave-like beat their foam upon the wings  
Flashing below the crystal fall of song,  
Which, melting, drops in music on the throng.  
From bird-throats kissing the warm air there drops  
The mingling of cool snow and flame through stops  
Of flute-like tongues that gather fire from light  
To make their honey golden to our sight.

The poorest even have their hour of pleasure  
When the daylight fails  
And the more advanced young women  
Play the piano,  
While the more advanced young men  
Accompany them with song,  
And those who cannot play their part,  
Sit in the window.

At a late hour all the voices stop,  
The day's perpetual sound is dead,  
So still now  
That you think the singers  
Must still be in that room,  
The women sleeping with the half-closed eyes  
Of wax-work figures,  
And the men as plaster caryatides  
Upholding the low roofs of lodging-houses  
On their sad, crushed heads.

The next few hours are far the best  
In which to temper truth with a trite compromise.

In more imaginative lands  
Our instruments are still the strings  
That carry every trembling confidence  
Through a half-open window—  
Till, stepping to the water's edge,  
You see your own tall shadow  
In the clear windows of the water  
With white pointed mask  
Abetting your new self disguised ;—  
And all the music of the air obeys  
The silver presence singing in the trees  
And giving time its intervals of lucid silence  
While the wind touches the taut strings of the sea,  
And the waterfalls of light  
Drip through the leaves  
Upon the dew-drenched grass.  
If such and such sit in the gamut of one's life  
Within the same close box of yellow bricks,  
Under a mutual roof ;  
Bow from the windows if you walk beneath  
And leash themselves to let you climb the stairs,  
Is not a little latitude allowed  
For subtle insolence, and half-veiled threats ?

Calling through the lattices of leaves  
At those wreathed windows  
Where, flower-like, the gold light hangs,  
Wise birds repeat,  
As echoes from cool caves,  
The words they're taught.

A wall of cactus guards the virgin sound  
Of piano scales  
Ringing the changes  
In a small schoolroom,  
And on the black keys  
Hammering with the hard beak of woodpeckers  
On a moss-grown tree.

From all around young ardent voices  
Reiterate the aged sentiments,  
While a brave few try the spiral stairs,  
Spinning like blown smoke to the glittering stars,  
Half-lost in the damp breath of clouds  
That tarnish the gilt edges of their song.

Through the splintered stillness  
Sounds like small animals  
Creep from their holes,  
And from a hundred various heights,  
From terraces of all the shaking fields of leaves,  
The frail ladders  
On which our meaning climbs  
Span the blue air  
Until they touch the sodden ground.

• • • • •

Music, that on the stooping sails of wind,  
Drifting, divides the distance, and can bind  
Those it has chosen with a supple string,  
Keeping them motionless to feel her wing,  
Can negative the constant turn of time  
And make long minutes shorter than the chime  
Of waters bruising the white foam of waves  
Before whose rush the sea-gods seek their caves ;  
Thus, at the music beating through a wall  
Tired limbs revive, and shadows seem the tall  
And flashing figures walking by a lake ;  
Known faces, unknown bodies slowly shake  
Their dancing skeletons to normal flesh,  
And walking in warm light within a mesh  
Of memories that follow on the scent ;  
The once-again-remembered wishes bent  
On embraces, or the easier art of flight  
Centre round persons crushed beneath the might  
Of phrases blown like trumpets, but to fall  
Deafened by loud sound, stifled by the pall  
Of soaring wings too heavy for their weight ;  
The music, dying, ceases, and the mate

Of every big ambition faints away,  
Gone are the dreams, the darkness lives, till day  
With staring light rehearses all the ills  
Poured down on us each morning from the hills.

But now, before ambition starts its reign  
And crowns itself within the sleeping brain,  
A fitting altar for a mocking rite,  
The hours arrive which offer to our sight,  
In place of sun motes in a dancing air,  
The lively brilliance of crowds laid bare,  
And, in the place of serenading winds,  
A surfeiting of subtle sound, that binds  
The plumage of the trees and makes them still,  
While murmurs run as water from a hill  
Down to the valleys where they form a flood,  
And rising, fill the veins of trees with blood,  
Break the quiet spell, and run their fire along  
Thrilling the leaves until they shout the song  
Of rolling river and of gliding cloud,  
More moving than the sea, and still more proud ;  
Of boughs fanning the liquid air until  
The wind comes back and breathes into each quill,  
And then, quite suddenly, the birds begin  
Throwing their brilliant spirals through the thin  
Clear pavers to the vaster vaults of air ;  
White caravans of clouds are listening there ;  
The murmurs are soft whispering of men  
Drinking the evening fall of coolness, when  
The dappled light gives intervals of shade  
Arching the light-ribbed dark with shadows made  
Of moving shapes, and lattices of green  
That trace their sudden sharpness, where, between  
Tall houses and the deep-diapered woods,  
Dim voices meet, and mix their various moods.

The flickering darkness covers as a cloak  
Those hidden there, when certain changes broke  
The set calm, and lit the still air with fire  
Before whose flames the old and ill retire ;

The beating blood gives wings that flash and lift  
To bodies whose young signs of life they sift  
From evidence and symbol of decay  
To feel the freshened splendour of new day.

Rise from the ashes where you lay so long,  
Stand up triumphant, resolute, and strong.  
The cowering darkness is as oil to fire  
Intended but to multiply your ire.  
Your wings must carry you to cleave the cloud  
And take the treasure from its castle proud,  
Building white bastions above the waves  
To hide the icy heart within its caves ;  
For bribe, the gold upon the glittering trees  
Lies there for you, as honey for the bees ;  
The streams and running currents of the air  
Are path and roadway for your footstep there,  
And walking them above the wide-stretched land  
The flower scents reach their blossoms to your hand ;  
And now to send a shiver through the leaves  
And thrill with melody the gathered sheaves,  
Touching the fields beyond the reach of sound  
To light the gathered gold upon the ground,  
The clouds dissolve and show a sea of glass,  
Still islands, and the floating ships that pass.

On earth once more, the music guides your feet,  
Annihilating distance till you meet.  
The moment comes to don your first disguise  
And posture it before the sightless eyes,  
Vast imbecile mentality of those  
Who cannot tell a thistle from a rose ;  
This is for others ; but for one, alone,  
The altered aspect and the change of tone ;  
For one alone ; yet others in these hours  
Show greater changes and more subtle powers.  
They glide in carriages past flashing green  
Fans, and dropping curtains, liquid with sheen  
Of waters, echoing every shaft of light  
That fills an avenue too long for sight

Until the gold spoke fits the wheel on high  
Moving in majesty along the sky ;  
From lakes that flash like mirrors or like swords  
The echoes send back shuddering sounds and words  
And multiply the moving shafts and wells,  
Fashion new glory and invent fresh spells  
To crack the glass of silence with the tongues  
That throw like fountains and have fire for lungs.  
They come by water with a white sail, blown  
Like a taut cloud, like a gaudy shell shown  
Through clear water on the pale plains of sand  
As a city with carved towers on gold strand ;  
Or float more gently, crossing a still world  
Using their oars as wings, with wide sails furled,  
Make the soft sound of feathers as they dip  
To wave the water back and press the lip  
Floating still further on the troubled glass  
That shows its secrets, and the mountain's mass.  
A wanton warmness breathes on them below  
The shaking smoothness, and white bodies show  
That ride the slight waves holding to the manes ;  
Men on galloping horses down the plains.  
Clearer water shows the fine limbs that tempt  
The dwellers in wild places, rough, unkempt ;  
If such there were who lived among these woods  
Crowding upon the bank, they'd fire their moods  
And carry a white body to the caves  
To catch the cataracting force of waves,  
And gratify the unaccustomed touch ;  
Soothe with cool snow of limbs the heat, of such  
Blind, flower-like, followers who track the sun  
And know the causeways where his feet have run  
Treading through clear clouds the tree-tops, below  
He dyes the leaves with brilliance to show  
The glittering windows and the shining roofs ;  
Pavilions that tremble as his hoofs  
Sound in the orchards where he stoops to hang  
Gold apples on high trees through which there rang  
Laughter like dropping water, till, sweet tears,  
The rain showers fell to dissipate their fears ;  
Small suffering and short-lived pain distil

This elixir of happiness, and still  
Among the drums and crystal gongs of rain  
Voices are calling and we know the rain  
Is ended, and the brilliant fruits begin  
To grow to fullness and to paint their skin.  
Daring the danger and the treacherous shore,  
They swim above the never-plundered store  
Of shadows, where the finished cup of sky  
Contains the waters, and the hills so high,  
They touch the trees that wave on the far bank,  
And shake the mirrored stillness of their rank.  
Green are the safest places in the grass  
To hide your comfort from the feet that pass,  
And little caves between the trees green dark  
Give you their stillness, and no need to hark  
For prying voices, while near music rings  
To keep the people practising their wings,  
For while they tread the tight-rope of the tune  
And walk on air, through clouds, as if to prune  
These flowers which grow in clusters high above  
The leaf-marked waters, lying there to prove  
The strength of silver, or the lure of gold  
As night or day, with cowardly or bold  
Appearance bribes with white flowers the waves  
Or, with fierce countenance controls his slaves ;  
Others can rest motionless, apart,  
Until the moment for their play can start ;  
In "caverns," "leaf-hung bowers," or "grots" they lie,  
And live their pastorals before the shy  
Pipes or piercing trumpets make this pretence  
No longer binding, and no more a fence.  
From other windows, other gods may lean,  
Their sons mark space with intervals of clean  
Waterfalls of rippling light, golden walls,  
Protecting proud gods, echo through their halls  
New signs and symbols acted in the air,  
Unknown to us, but seen by clear eyes there ;  
And from the windows each can watch his son  
Leave Heavens of sparkling brilliance, to shun  
The drifting gardens with sweet-breathing trees  
Blown down the wide sky ; for they choose the lees

And sifted dregs of goodness where they find  
Sweet fruits of conquest, and of loss, combined.  
As soon as ever the deep woods are still,  
The hollow valley, and the hanging hill  
Murmur with liquid voices, till in turn  
The woods reply with fiery sounds that burn  
And cleanse the dim night, for the gods to reach  
Trees rising like green cliffs above a beach.  
The carriages arrive, release their load  
Beneath green arches, where the grass is mowed  
Smooth as the sea, and through its depth as clear ;  
The leaves, like men on cliffs, can gaze down sheer  
And watch, beneath the dancing boughs of waves,  
People leaving carriages like caves,  
Step into the sunlight, for a moment blind,  
Dazed by the dropping splendour that they find ;  
They stagger like men in the far-flung spray  
Of the shivered waves on a stormy day,  
But the foam falling like snow down the air  
Is dust in wide beams of the sun, whose hair  
Gilds the blue zenith that he leaps along  
With lion-like limbs and loud voice so strong.

## TWO CLOWNS' PSYCHOLOGY

**I**N hyphenated lightning  
the hoardings hammer a small word of hope  
upon the motionless wide sky  
whose walls are pitched upon the far-off hills  
and whose torn edges  
worry the molten glowing sea—

Set in these squares of blue or red  
fierce screens for those who need a rest,  
their tired eyes on the winking leaves  
that rise like bubbles  
in the stream of wind  
and, dying,  
part dry lips  
and sigh their noiseless songs,  
white sun above them  
with its coat of crystal  
shredded into shuddering blue ;  
these two consistently amusing men  
sit, crumpled, on the tin edges  
of half-a-dozen planes of light  
like a tramp's bundle  
hurled down in drunken fury  
on the trampled metal  
of one night's tenement of parched, dry field.

*X.* “If I read an evening paper,  
turning pages of advertisement,  
the smudged, wet print scratches the eye ;  
if I look up I run my glance  
to coloured tin and pasted hoardings  
building us a patent sky.  
Is the man who makes this gifted,  
is he dowered with divinity  
that he prints praise upon the clouds ?  
Our life must be a meal of Sundays  
swallowing advice and prices,  
mute and obeisant before his statement,  
kneeling for a daily blessing,

answering on printed postcards,  
agreeable to our prostitution.”

*Y.* “I think you take such things too seriously.  
Suppose now we are on the stage,  
I see profusion, flowering trees,  
painted water in the background ;  
if you sat there simply reading  
people would laugh like the children watching you.”

*X.* “At once you start exaggerating.  
Why should I be on the stage ?  
Why should they laugh at me more than you ?  
Can you never realise, I want to know  
why the lettering is ugly, and the colour bad,  
the woodwork moulded—the allotment sun-scorched ?  
when they might found better type, use good colours,  
metal for wood, and grow cool trees  
to drop their sweetness, on the passing crowds ;  
also, are these artists, even now,  
to draw things finer for the public eye.”

*Y.* “Yes, but I like to think about you on the stage ;  
magnifying objects, as they are.  
Sooner than have good posters  
would I satirize these here,  
drawing out humour with decaying teeth ;  
satisfy a curiosity :  
I like the way the words can answer,  
calling to each other from across the square,  
they are noisy like crashing waves  
crested with colour ;  
some of them stand alone  
like rocks, foam splashed,  
with stunted trees shaking in the hoarse-voiced wind ;  
they are the islands in a tumbling sea  
very much reminding me of Korin’s waves.”

*X.* „Affection, unadulterate ;  
can’t you see they make a world  
with names alone as symbols ?  
I suggested planting trees

to drop down sweetness on the dusty crowds,  
but very soon the sight of trees will die,  
and new advice for sunshades will usurp their space ;  
they'll write a name to summon to the mind  
the smell of flowers, cool snow on the sun-soaked hills,  
and in the place of wind a fan will turn  
trying as a wounded bird to leave the ground  
and hide in the clouds that now are lit  
showing new pictures to a gaping world.  
Such is the world they make ; the buildings stand  
roofless, waiting for a gang of slaves  
driven with whips and torture to the task ;  
I see them cringing on the lofty ladders  
bowed with the load of bricks they carry ;  
up at the top they stop for breath,  
and with a last heave tread the platform  
dizzily looking down the cliff-steep wall.  
Then the bricks are seized from them,  
they scurry off,  
and go down the ladder like a falling bird.  
From a glass-less window a bald-head leans out,  
tallying the windows with the avenues  
that lead through arches of reflected light,  
varying its splendour with the play of clouds  
driven along high arches in the air  
like chariots on the wide walls of a town ;  
till where the tunnels open to the sky  
from the high windows you can see,  
not flower beds, but the gaudy sails of flowers  
dancing on a lake to the soft tune of wind  
among the islands where the winds live,  
buildings frail palaces among the trees,  
with ladders down to the sunlit fields of sea  
and spiral stairways to the terraces of cloud,  
whose cool pavement they delight to tread  
among the playing fountains of soft rain.

Then distant windows answer back with gold,  
sounding an echo to the evening bells ;  
the bands are playing in the crowded parks ;  
this half-built barracks has released its slaves.  
In spite of the beauty of the evening air,

the crowd is ugly, and the band is bad,  
but I decorated nature till it reached your pitch ;  
and our ultimate imaginings are much the same.”

*X.* “My theatricals can mask the object,  
making the surfaces of such things agreeable,  
where, *you*, forget the ugliness, leave out the mar,  
and so progress by leaps in place of strides ;  
I am fully conscious, but I want to change it,  
where you can forget and force your mind  
to spin fresh splendour out of the frayed silk.  
What I mean by *theatrically*, when I ventured to suggest  
the laughing you would cause and its reward to follow,  
consists more of a forced exaggeration.  
If everyone was quite as funny as you are  
there would be no laughter, or a different standard  
by which to judge the cardinal points of beauty.  
Here is precisely the question of new values,  
new standards of good and bad, new scales of beautiful and ugly.  
For example :—  
You might be working all the summer at a seaside town ;  
playing twice nightly to a holiday crowd.  
It would be a hot afternoon ; you will drop your waistcoat,  
light another cigarette, and leave your room.  
It takes four minutes walking to the pier  
down a public garden where the seats are full.  
Picnics are over, and they feel too glutted  
even to watch you, as you walk along.  
Then there is a turnstile, and the sea comes out  
barking at the pier-supports and lashing at the sand,  
above it half a mile of planks and a shrill band.  
This is better than the sights we see  
sitting here, looking at the dusky hoardings.  
To continue—perhaps it was too hot that afternoon,  
but in the evening, at any rate, you have your chance,  
then you can pretend to be just anything you like.”

*X.* “If I say I’m Julius Cæsar,  
do you think they will believe me ?  
Can I convince myself from cockney,  
and bad physique of the stage soldiers ?

If someone sneezes in the middle of my speech  
everybody laughs and I forget my part."

*T.* "These, on the contrary, are just the times of stress,  
strategic moments that decide the battle.  
Someone sneezes. Parry to their feint.  
Imitate them, show them that your sneeze is louder."

*X.* "But why have you got this mania for the stage?  
I've never acted since I was at school.  
It seems to me most foolish of all follies,  
the greatest space and distance from reality.  
Even you agree with me about the universal ugliness,  
then you suggest the stage as remedy,  
and think that I could cure it by sporadic acting."

*T.* "A travelling agapena, an earthly shrine on wheels  
drawn round the country by high-stepping horses,  
that is my notion of a death to dullness,  
and if not with horses by a thundering motor  
drumming its persistence on the giggling air.  
Persistence, and I mean the everlasting life;  
Wind in loose sails embodying their speed  
suddenly set forth to cut the rolling waves,  
like a swift-flowering meteor on a golden cord  
held by loose line but growing to its fullness.  
Can you imagine this swift-growing flower,  
trained in position, but with impulse of a fountain  
rocket-rushing to cool its gilded wing in clouds?  
This is the force by which its feet march  
up the windows of the bare-white sky;  
this, then, is the flower that shows as a meteor,  
throws as a fountain, gleams as a rocket,  
and this flower is the doomed continuance of life.  
Giggling air, I said, and this will yield its secrets,  
and whisper them behind the canvas wings,  
softly breathe it as the voice of a prompter.  
Has music never sounded in the evening wind  
trickling disconsolately through the woods,  
like a water-carrier working with a broken urn,  
that you never knew the sacred power of laughter:—  
broad grins watching from a red-brick wall,

on steady elbows while they watch the slaughterman  
striking down the animals they eat next day ;  
and then an acid drop and then a well-known tune.  
Drumming its persistence on the giggling air,  
I said,

and, in fact, the rolling drums should rattle in the square  
before a thick curtain that no eye can pierce,  
and trumpets should sound out from all the square-set towers  
to signal the triumphant hour when the sun is dead,  
when the gardens are lit and little laughters ring  
from wide-flung windows under the trees.  
Persistence, I said—I mean the giggling air,  
rather I should say I mean the giggling drums,  
or rolling drums: persistence—and I mean the . . .”

*X.* “. . . persistent air? . . .”

*Y.* “No, no ; Persistence, and I mean the giggling air ;  
I meant to talk about the everlasting life,  
until you muddled me and made me stop !  
Now I can go no further. . . .  
I shall go home, and you can walk about !”

Ever so wearyly they left their seat,  
the shadow of the hoardings, the light of the town,  
built gates and fences on all sides.  
*Y* went through a door that opened wide :  
and *X* to a railing that he clambered over.  
Now they walked among the mouldering tombs,  
at back of the advertisements, behind the hoardings,  
stumbling on the gibbets where the posters hung—  
*X* showed in a pool of light,  
oozing from a crack through which he looked in passing.  
The arena, sandless, dusty with light,  
gaped there, grinning with its teeth, the lettering.  
There he saw the circus for such fools to play in,  
lit up, listening for their nonsense with quick ears,  
and, when they had bled enough, were driven away.  
Back through the darkness, till the streets began,  
as far from *Y* as ships can be at sea,  
*X* climbed stairs and lit his aureole of gas.

## FIRST VARIATION ON A THEME BY GEORGE PEELE

“God, in the whizzing of a pleasant wind,  
Shall march upon the tops of mulberry trees.”—*George Peele*.

**I** WAS lying in the dappled shade,  
the lute hung lifeless in my lap,  
When God stepped out of a moving cloud  
to tread the tops of mulberry trees.

He hushed the trumpets, furled His flags,  
and made His angels wave their wings ;  
thus was blown the pleasant wind  
that wafted Him within my sight.

And when I saw Him through the leaves,  
I knew He trod His winepress there ;  
the nectar sliding from the mountains  
did not please Him like those berries.

I touched my strings, and God looked down ;  
He smiled on me, and gave me wings,  
but e'en His plumes had not the glow  
the fire of fruit lit in the air.

All the while He kept His pace  
and marched on in the whizzing wind.  
I ran behind with feathered feet  
and followed Him as best I could.

Had I gone quite far enough,  
we should have reached to Black-man's land,  
where ebon faces show out clear  
against the brooks and crystal waves.

But dying daylight told the hour  
and warned me I had best turn back.  
I wept at parting, then I smiled,  
and knew the purpose of these plumes.

For with their help I bridged the air ;  
I perched upon the silent sill,  
and from this height my lute will sound,  
and I shall catch the whispered call.

## SECOND VARIATION

“God, in the whizzing of a pleasant wind,  
Shall march upon the tops of mulberry trees.”—*George Peele.*

CAN a white wave its coolness keep  
and break beneath the hot sun’s stare ;  
will incense-trees for ever weep,  
or do they too our changes share ?

Flowers climb on the trees but once  
to cloud those Heavens with their stars ;  
the fountains need a melting ounce,  
a load of snow, to start their wars.

The blossoms and the leaping springs  
ask for kindness ere they start ;  
an eagle grows strong with its wings,  
and cannot prey without this part.

The wine lies in the grape until  
a plucking hand can take its might ;  
barred is the window, mute the sill,  
unless you climb to grasp the sight.

So, as I played my lute and sang,  
I saw God in the mulberry trees.  
His angels clapped their wings. There rang  
a pleasant wind that bore the bees.

Still swifter to the flowers that flamed  
and shone like lamps in deepest dark,  
and all the unicorns we tamed  
ran to cool themselves and hark.

For God was singing as He went,  
pressing nectar for His drink,  
and for the coolness that this lent  
the beasts came thirsting to the brink.

But I ran up the ladder fast,  
rattling the windows with my notes ;  
and, as I played, a splendour passed,  
and laughter on the wind still floats.

### THIRD VARIATION

“God, in the whizzing of a pleasant wind,  
Shall march upon the tops of mulberry trees.”—*George Peele.*

**S**O cool my spring, my waves so still  
they lie, as dead, with glassy face,  
breathe but on them to give me life ;  
and while this mirror keeps your breath  
my foam is born, my leaves begin.

Run, shepherd, quicker than my fall,  
and swim to cool me at my side,  
for, now I live again, I burn.  
You must quench me with cold fruit  
or else I parch and fade again ;  
only give them into my hand  
and I will grow you a golden tree.

But how will it help me, your golden tree ?  
I have no need of it for my lambs,  
nor can I swim with it to the shore.  
If I cut its timbers down,  
and make a golden ship for myself,  
lamb’s wool will make a sail for me  
and the winds of the air will give me speed.  
The waters here aren’t wide enough,  
I need a space as void as the sky,  
to tack in the wind and sail far out  
or, like a cloud, stay still at anchor.

Be not cruel to lay me low,  
and leave me burning at the water’s brim.  
I hidden lie among the boughs  
till you try each perch to find me ;  
but, at each look, I drift like rain.

This is the promised tree. Its leaves,  
its stem more flashing-bright than glass  
are one, in growing from your fountain foot.

## MRS. H. . . . OR A LADY FROM BABEL

“ **S**PRECHEN sie Deutsch? Parlez-vous Francais?  
Parlate Italiano? Dearest Child!”

Mrs. H. would float the words  
As jewels from her sunshade,  
Which to my infant eyes  
Seemed as the fountain of all frankincense.  
Beneath the twittering shadow  
She leaned out, looking in one's eyes,  
Her body perfectly enmeshed  
Beneath the clinging scales of gold,  
And all her landau  
Filled with the falling jewels—  
The melting of the million bells  
Set ringing when the wind breathes  
And the blue spaces of the sky  
Are filled with shaking leaves—  
Divine wisdom as a freehold gift  
From black-gloved hands—  
The feast of untold tongues!

On a bridge one evening  
From behind the nearest house  
The sunset air came suddenly alive with sound,  
The throbbing from a mandoline fell forth  
As the long lines of water when a boat floats by.  
This ended, she was asked for coppers  
In Italian.

“ Coachman, drive on!  
Mes meilleurs sentiments à maman,  
Mes meilleurs. . . .”

## WEEK-ENDS

**B**LOW your long horn,  
Red cloud,  
before the wide-thrown gates  
and fresh-lit braziers of heaven ;—  
to move the snowy mane  
like mist above the plain,  
and thus uncover  
lawns like level seas,  
and houses cool as trees  
run round by balconies  
that lead from house to house  
and shew the sky against  
a web of shivering leaves  
struck through with gold.

The gardener must drop his fruit  
and running down the ladder from the tree  
must bow respectfully  
to Mrs. . . .  
who walks into her Paradise  
like a young deer playing in its park ;—  
and I must enter as a friend  
to watch her wise commandments—

“The roses must be sprayed,  
and judging from the apples in your hand  
a thousand wasps have dug there.”  
“Yes, M’um.”

“Yes ! I think so ;  
and the borders are not neat enough,  
these stalks again are short enough,  
why aren’t they longer ? ”  
“Yes ! M’um.”

“Well then, you see,  
I want the tree-tops trimmed,  
and then at tennis

one can watch the steamers  
through Lord Dodo's chimneys."

"Exactly."  
"Yes! M'um."

"And growing in the beds,  
embroidering the paths,  
gazing in each other's eyes  
wherever there is water  
I've laid geraniums  
like this one."

"I see."  
"Yes! M'um."

"Hold it!"

"Yes! M'um."

"Whilst I show this gentleman  
the way I've dug the lake  
just lying where it nets the houses  
and reflects them with their window-boxes."

"Fascinating."  
"Yes! M'um."

"What do you think my husband  
waits for in the train?"

"Tell me!"  
"M'um."

"Every yard the train comes  
nearer to the station  
he's thinking of the view;  
steps on to the platform,  
leaves the station,  
turns the corner,  
and it's there before him."

"M'um."

"A moment, m'um!  
Miss Argentine was telling that her trees . . ."  
"You see it is no selfish pleasure,

not a private toy——”

“ May I speak a moment, m’um. . . .”

“ Others share the joy.”

That moment there came  
ringing through the leaves,  
shaking the canopies  
and falling from the branches like soft snow,  
the voice of some one from a balcony :

Mrs. . . . was listening  
to recognise the call  
that deals a death-blow to each afternoon.  
With but a brief farewell  
this lady left us,  
and all the while  
we saw her white dress  
glistening through the boughs,  
and heard her footsteps  
leave the lawn  
to sound upon the gravel,  
till she left a railing of gold spears between us ;  
while even then  
we heard her answer  
mocking questions lowered through the air.

*Extract from “BIRD-ACTORS”*

**T**HAT splendid charlatan, Sebastian Mondor,  
Sets up his quivering trestles,  
Across the crowd they stretch  
Their twisted arches, splendider  
Than the slow palaces of air  
That screen the sun’s gold stare,  
Or, when he moves in state,  
With dropped wine, sweet exhalation  
Smooth the gay arch he traverses.  
Two feathers in their hair,  
Comedians strut the sheer edge  
Above the foaming crowd,  
Loose sleeves and trousers flapping with the wind  
Through the crowd  
The tremors of their movements run ;  
Till the furthest feel,  
Dashed in their faces,  
The fierce blossoms of each whistling parrot-cry.

## TWO VARIATIONS ON THEMES OUT OF ZARATHUSTRA

### I. "LAUGHING LIONS WILL COME."

*Nietzsche.*

THE prophet from his desert cave  
Listens to the sound of water  
Lapping with tongues the fringes of the sand.  
Young flowers open for the bees ;  
A roadway for the yellow sun  
Climbs from the hills into the fallow sea.  
The scented bells hold golden sound ;  
And the strong lion drinks the salted waves,  
Cooling his mane within the sudden foam.  
The bee skirts tremblingly the shining dew,  
Looking for honey in the golden dells,  
While the lion shakes the loud hills again.  
This early morning there may lie some gold  
Forgotten when the light was fled ;  
To-day the great beams may shine  
On opened caves where run swift rivers  
Shooting their arrows at the swordless sea,  
And blind to the sun whose shining armour  
Shows in the sky among the clouds he charges,  
Driving them across a wind-walled field  
Into the shelter of the towering hills.  
Honey may be hiding in the waking flowers,  
The man in armour hides behind the gold,  
The strongest waves, far off, are snow.  
These are dangers to the daring robber,  
The armoured impotence of man-made deity,  
And crowd-thick, barking heads, on the lion-like sand,  
Gathering honey in the rolling desert.  
Such are the perils to a fasting prophet—  
Dog-like men, and men-like gods.  
Many doors lie open into his cave,  
For lion-springs, flash of the surging sea,  
And dogs that bark to bar him from his palm.

To leave his cave, and walk on the burning sand,  
He passes the sun that bridles his yellow mane,  
And the roaring crowd, an ocean of clashing waves.

Tight-rope dancers run over the roofs  
And fall in the market-place—  
Raising a laugh,  
It looks like walking on the rainbow's bridge  
Among the clouds, behind the windows;  
There below fly the flags of smoke  
Waving possession that the Lord's at home  
And works, a creator, in his own fair garden  
Where trees spring as fountains, lift into the air,  
Their branches steadied in the height with wings  
That quiver in the stream of wind,  
And by the cold are frozen as they drop,  
Before they foam again as fiery darts  
Piercing the soft breasts of the pool,  
They tremble above the water, bird-like, with flashing feathers.

Is Zarathustra armoured that he goes  
Leaving his cave, down mountains,  
Fording swift rivers, to attain the town?  
The tight-rope dancers had turned back again  
Waving their wands to balance a sharp curve,  
They stagger as a child who learns his walk  
Using a crutch in place of human hand,  
Holding his own high above the head  
To guide him on an easy, level path—  
Guitars are played by men upon high stilts  
Stepping over gardens to keep up the tune  
Because the dancers only move with music.

With creaking leg and hollow tread  
They walk among the houses, chase the rope,  
And whisper warning while they play more loud.  
Below, the cripples lean out from their corners,  
And a dwarf or two will strain his little stride  
To run like a child holding a strong kite.  
This is the magnet drawing every eye  
When Zarathustra comes behind the curtain of the gold horizon,  
Walks into the town through the deserted gates.

Judges are holding back the wheel of time,  
Fitting the spokes to figures on a watch

As they follow the competitors on airy paths.  
He walks beneath an archway, hears his tread,  
Multiplied and echoed in this empty hall,  
And then is alone again on empty street.

Stepping out firm, he starts to sing,  
Turns the corner and is in the square,  
His song a loud river that now joins the sea.  
Who will he first step up to,  
Take by the shoulder,  
To break down his stare ?

Will he stoop down to a dwarf and shout,  
Ask him to run across the square  
And beg the Mayor to stop festivities a moment ?  
Is it too dangerous to hold a stilt,  
Shouting out loud into the noisy air  
To attract attention from a wooden giant ?

If he holds a stilt and stops the music  
Down will tumble all the tight-rope dancers,  
And the men who play the mandolines cannot stand still.  
Shout as loud as he possibly can,  
He will never drown the music  
And the roaring crowds.

One course, one only, is there to his hand ;  
Wonder and marvel are the joys to-day,  
And this is the course that he must tread.

God goes on a cloud,  
But the dancers walk there,  
And the crowd shout louder than the singing of His angels.  
Thinking a moment, Zarathustra stopped,  
Stroked his beard, and hesitated  
Till his mind lit up ;  
Without a cry, without a word,  
He started running down the square,  
Raced ever quicker till he reached a wall.

No sooner touched it  
Than he turned again,  
Running ever faster than the way he came.  
Reached the starting point,  
Turned once more  
Raising a dust to hide his face.

The men on stilts looked down like birds

Who watch for prey in the glistening grass,  
And dropped the instruments from their hands ;  
    The dancers when the music stopped  
    Swayed on their ropes  
    And fell like stars,  
Flashed through the air with trailing sparks  
And opened on the ground  
Their clumsy petals.  
    The dwarfs and cripples raised themselves,  
    Came from their corners into dazzling sun  
    And ran among the crowd to start them running.  
Soon Zarathustra showed in front.  
Just behind were the men on stilts,  
After them the able-bodied tan,  
    Followed by cripples and the bounding dwarfs ;  
    Half of them are running from right to left,  
    While Zarathustra showed from left to right.  
Soon he caught the laggards and the limping halt  
And ran among their crutches  
By the jumping dwarfs.  
    This time, turning down a narrow street,  
    He ran into a house  
    And climbed the shaking stairs.  
Out from the window on a roof he stepped  
While the people ran up stairways  
Like a flood inside a well ;  
    Down a drain-pipe on the ground again  
    He heard the tumbling ceilings  
    And the roofs fall in.  
While the survivors took the road again  
Zarathustra ran out from a gate once more  
Till he reached the burning sand,  
    And fell back breathless,  
    Blind from the dust  
    And dead with running.  
Clouds of dust still rose from the town,  
Blurred murmurs  
And the tread of hundreds running.

“ I won attention by my ruse.  
    Shouting was vain, and had I showed

Floating above them on a cloud  
They would have guessed me lowered from a tower  
Treading the yielding clouds like a man through snow  
So I had to run among them like a wind ;  
But for all my running they have never seen  
The stride of my footsteps,  
But thought themselves  
Each in each other to contain the cause.  
My years of meditation in a cave  
Gave more hope for another visit,  
But now that they run themselves around the town  
Nothing will stop them but themselves alone.  
If someone with young lungs  
Blew out through a trumpet the last chance for man,  
It would be a feature in their entertainment.  
I must look at the sun,  
Who sinks to die  
And pours his treasures to the sea to keep,  
Guarding them with tempests and a change of tide.  
So that in sinking to the sunless caves,  
Where they lie to light the darkness till he comes again,  
The poorest fisherman has golden oars  
To row with over the echoing waves,  
Suddenly shaking their yellow manes  
To sound new music to the gods below ;  
And when the gold is taken from the oars  
The music ceases and the waves are mute  
Till a new wind whispers from the thirsty trees  
And the fisherman can hoist his sail.”

## II. PARADE VIRTUES FOR A DYING GLADIATOR

**F**OR safety, hear this, common mortals !  
March with the others—swing your arms—  
don't step too fast—don't reach so far.  
. . . Laggards are devoured by wolves :  
if you but reach the enemy first  
an eagle from the iron air  
will soar steep down, and peck your eyes.  
Be the first to steal down fire,  
and you shall lie on the aching rock,  
a threatening wing your roof and shade.

The scaffold stands and totters in the wind,  
a cage for the light—a platform through the clouds :  
remark—a scaffold and a scaffolding,  
a terrace for death—and bars for young birds.

At the top he stoops to work,  
the shadows give him longer limbs,  
he strides on stilts to tie the ropes,  
only string can hold the floors  
and keep the telescopic roofs apart.  
A little rubbing of dry hands,  
snatches of sawdust on the floor,  
then he nods for the fanfare like a God.

A screech of trumpets—before we guess,  
before we know what he stands there for,  
the planks split up, they bend like rushes,  
the frightened birds fly off, he tumbles,  
falls through the brittle lights that snap  
and give like waves when a meteor falls.

Now he crumples on the sand,  
let him collect himself, spit blood and words.

They flood the arena—cover the sands—  
The beakéd war-boats raise their sails,  
like birds they tack in the wind.

The second philosopher appeared,  
proudly holding a ladder.

“Wait,” he was saying, “till we’re near enough,  
then watch me making for another world.”  
He did not climb. He lined the deck,  
the sailors helped him, charged with their ram,  
the other ship was staggered, helpless.  
They lay alongside, near enough,  
over with the ladder, he climbed along.  
His little weight decided things,  
the two boats went apart, the hooks,  
the claws of his ladder were wrenched out,  
he lay like a man between wild horses.  
One arm came off, and then a leg.  
They picked him into a boat, rowed off,  
drained out the water, and when the sand was dry,  
there he lay close to the other,  
the two philosophers together again.

The third put up a horn to his mouth.  
“I deny,” he roared, “a better world,  
but I hope a stranger, not a nicer heaven.  
Also your fault—and not my choice.”  
And then he disappointed the crowd,  
fell, like a log, without one struggle,  
killed by poison, drunk in secret.

“As my turn,” the fourth man shouted,  
“I’ll walk on stilts through the drying water,  
collect the bodies, carry them out,  
and give them to the crowd for burial.”  
Then he began tremendous tests,  
beat one stilt with an axe to break it,  
looked through the eyeholes of his visor,  
bared an arm to feel his sword.  
Then on one leg his whole weight leaning,  
he strapped his other leg to the stilt,

knocking it on to a wall to test it.

Both legs finished, he cannot stand,  
he has to stamp and stagger around,  
a tireless peripatetic.

They hand him helmet, sword, and trident,  
and, last of all, the trumpet that he holloes down.  
Now he is ready to start, steel clad,  
and shod with hoofs of sounding wood.

He grips the trumpet with his teeth,  
bares the trident, holds the net.

The first he comes to still is breathing.  
He lances him with the trident, lifts him,  
opens the net for the crumpled body.  
The second man, legless, armless,  
lies there helpless.

Little is left for the wide-tongued trident.

The man who drank the poison, died,  
but still the venom lives within him.  
He is spiked with the same three lances,  
and the same points transfixing both,  
killed the other who was breathing,  
but being limbless could not move.  
The weight of the two together stifled,  
strained, and made this gladiator gasp—  
to right himself, he must stand still,  
he stumbled, drew to his height,  
and fell.

Next we saw one stilt come out,  
and wave above the shallow water.  
He disengaged it, dropped it off,  
the other leg was doubled up,  
but he could sit knee deep in water,  
and use the floating stilt as a crutch.  
His trident stuck up out of the sand,  
the visor and the trumpet still were his :  
helmet for head, and tube for voice,  
enough material for martial music.  
The drums were rattling for his death,  
but there he sat, and did not die.

He had the only pair of stilts,  
and whilst the water ebbed from him,  
leaving this monster on the sand,  
he can string out platitudes,  
and make a dying actor's speech.

“How do we differ from dull soldiers ?”  
These were the words he started with.  
“Where is the gulf for us to jump,  
where are the stairs for me to climb,  
so that I ride a horse, a cloud,  
and rule the azure fields of air ?  
Why do I want these ; is it vain  
to try and open gates of glass ?  
They are transparent, is it vanity  
that I wish for men to see me  
ride beneath these gates, and glitter,  
shine the other side from them ?  
Now they stand, where then I stood,  
they see me where I nothing saw.  
But when I came behind the glass,  
the light to show me, dazzled me,  
now I grope through a golden fog,  
I stumble on the beams as stones,  
I never see the road I walked :  
lamps blind me ; blatant shouting deafens me :  
the more I stumble, more they cheer.

I suggest these virtues to all dying gladiators.  
Never bury your rival's body, let their corpses taint the air,  
do not put them in caves for the relic hunters,  
but leave them to the vultures, they will quicken the decay.  
This virtue I learnt, first, to-day.

Your enemies must feel both edges of the sword ;  
they shall be laggards for all hungry wolves ;  
and prey for the vultures if they die too soon :  
this is why I build my house  
using tombstones from damp fields,  
that is why I said to-day  
I'd gather the bodies and give them to you,

letting you dig and hide them for yourselves,  
and keep you busy, fill your minds,  
so that while I stand in the glare  
you watch me not, but grope with your hands,  
running the sand through greedy fingers.

Now I have light more prying than the sun,  
no audience so nervous as the fainting stars  
who gently withdraw, but watch behind the dark ;  
none are there, spying.

So you see I have gathered my rivals,  
Given them over to you, occupied your attention,  
now there is full light for me, and no rivalry,  
alone I can work my wonders, alone in my own hours of day."

But then he worked his own greatest wonder,  
his head dropped, knees sank, and he rolled into the water.

That is a virtue, but not a parade one :  
Soldiers should run away to live another day.  
Good as far as he went.  
Good to gather and expose the corpses,  
but weak of him to die, knee deep in water.  
I should admire him more, sitting on his box  
or washed ashore on a querulous hencoop.  
This much I like, that he walked on stilts,  
that the rôle he chose never let him stop,  
that he could not stand, but must stamp ahead.

It seemed to me, if my turn should come,  
that I would not take the sand, scour out,  
and clear the threshold of the Statue dust ;  
any more than build with the dead, mute, stone ;  
that I would not snap the fallen swords,  
or sharpen their points to help me,  
neither slay the old, or build the new religion,  
neither beg the streets, or live on an altar.

Parade these virtues, dying gladiators !  
Beware of the final, finishing copestone.  
Hang many masks from your belt,

but the last one awkwardly stops your disguise,  
until you break the string, to take the bead—  
And tumble the walls of your Paradise.  
If you cage your growing trees,  
no birds will float through them and sing ;  
if there are walls, you cannot watch  
the fields that slope down till they hold the deep sea.  
Between yourself and the waves there lie  
all that divides and walls you in.  
A Paradise is dangerous to hunt through  
for the rare tigers among the tropical trees ;  
if you had never attempted this,  
you had never been lying wounded now.

An icy wind interrupted this flow,  
a fall of stage snow fluttered from the roof.  
We were aghast to see the gladiator  
rolling the snow in his trembling hands—  
Not to soothe him—for the next scene was a fight on sledges--  
but the gladiator finished several handfuls  
and then he threw them into the audience.  
It was a very irritating dust,  
and broke in clouds, till everybody sneezed.  
So I took my hat and coat and went,  
letting them sneeze and seeing them weep—  
and I turned this thought in my mind.  
Surely the gladiator threw this snow  
wanting their tears for two good reasons :  
“ First,” said he, “ I’ll have them cry,  
their tears shall flow for my timely death ;  
secondly, their tears shall hide and veil  
until with smarting they cannot see :  
and then they’ll miss my proud successor.”

## DR. DONNE AND GARGANTUA

“Run and catch a falling star,  
get with child a mandrake root.”—*John Donne.*

**S**HALL arrow-root and Benger’s food  
furnish us fancies for our mood?  
The mandrake, and the witches’ sabbath  
may yield more fruitful aftermath.  
Gargantua and Doctor Donne  
swallowed their pills like other folk,  
they laid a wager, neither won,  
yet neither underwent the yoke.  
Gargantua said he would contrive  
to get a mandrake root with child.  
Doctor Donne had said he’d strive  
to snare a meteor, wet and wild.  
And so they set out from the Alps  
which showed more white than old men’s scalps ;  
they shivered to their knees in snow,  
and waited for the sign to blow.  
Their view embraced all seas and lands,  
the devil tempted them to leap,  
if they relied on wings, not hands,  
no longer should they stray like sheep ;  
they should go forth as eagles, keen  
to blind the sunlight with swift sheen ;  
like lions they should walk abroad  
till silence trembled when they roared.  
Spurning this offer with just pride,  
they opened maps and looked intent,  
the way they chose was hot and dried,  
without the ease that promise lent.

A bugle broke the stillness ;  
ineffectual, and almost muted ;  
quickly shaking hands, they started  
making down the mountain side ;  
first they walked together, later,  
when they came upon a river,

Doctor Donne crossed over quicker,  
leaving on the other bank  
poor Gargantua the fatter,  
slower walker of the pair.  
Say good-bye to Doctor Donne,  
I choose Gargantua protagonist  
and lift my hero to the pedestal ;  
I shall wheel him on his car,  
like a tiger he shall pass among the frightened trees,  
the arms of waves shall hold him and shall move him,  
he will be a sea-god dying on the waters ;  
I shall halt, and in the public square  
he will be a totem to the kneeling crowd,  
a foetus in a belly, a god upon an altar,  
a mirror for perfection of the unborn race.  
I shall shout something as follows :—

“ I am not come with elephants,  
nor can I cure you of disease ;  
but here is Gargantua, the giant,  
the trumpet at God’s lips  
to blow my orders to the winds who run for me :  
not only this, but a mirror  
flatter than sea, less misty than the sky,  
for the sun to hang over.  
I like to think of him watching my friend,  
to catch the weakness that he wears himself,  
and mend his movements from Gargantua’s style.  
Soon, too soon, the other stars will burn  
and forge sharp swords to kill the sun.  
Pray to him until he falls in his armour,  
and all the time know that my friend is important ;  
When the hot light is dead, then will your hour have come,  
send him ambassador, ask for his help,  
he will find out a means, and will direct your feet,  
life will come back again, darkness will die.

Gargantua is here to-day  
to get a mandrake root with child,  
over the hills not far away  
I want you to think of Doctor Donne  
walking the world to net a falling star.

A fair wager, and I hope you'll help him.  
To get a mandrake root with child  
would solve the problem of your flesh ;  
If Gargantua succeeds  
the sexual problem may be somehow settled ;  
to-day I won't say more than this.  
You must think for yourselves of the fresh delights ;  
but a word of warning ;  
remember, please, that my friend, Gargantua,  
sings beneath a window when he can't find the stairs,  
my advice is lock your doors  
and send your daughters to their beds,  
Gargantua is quick to seize them.  
I will speak of Donne when he comes this way."

So I made Gargantua get up his speed.  
He came quite quickly down to the plains,  
but I lost him in crossing a little wood,  
thinking too deeply of the words I'd say  
in introduction to his keen campaign.

It seems Gargantua stole away  
hid behind the trunks of trees,  
crawled along the hollows.  
I blew my bugle in vain  
down the valleys,  
getting more breathless till I touched a road,  
where I stopped for a moment,  
looking and breathing ;  
I pretended to be coughing  
when some peasants passed.  
As soon as they turned a bend  
off I had gone again ;  
now that I thought it safe,  
I bugled once more,  
I blew like anything into the town  
with the shrill welcome of my own fanfare.  
But they were all asleep,  
barred with shut windows,  
and I drowned in the darkness,  
was lost in obscurity,  
fell down, fatigued, on the pavement and slept.

Fatal weakness, to let slip  
the firm control I exercise,  
for should I sleep, then should Gargantua  
he only speaks when I'm away,  
and only acts when I'm asleep.  
I woke, and thought of Doctor Donne,  
then of Gargantua with a shock,  
realising it was still dark  
and something had woken me from my dreams.

Gargantua left me in the wood,  
he hid behind the trunks of trees,  
crawled along the hollows  
and lay behind the hedges while he heard my blasts—  
Then, as the darkness fell,  
into the town he walked, mocking me,  
I suppose he mistook my obscurity,  
never suspecting what there was to hide ;  
so he dropped his slow, wobbling gait,  
walked briskly, swinging his arms,  
straight through the town,  
and, in the middle, he stopped to shout.  
There was, immediately, a certain confusion,  
people came pouring from the dancing halls ;  
and a mob surged round him,  
trying to listen.  
Then he remembered to be mystical,  
and all of them grovelled on their knees together ;  
but he carried things too far,  
and spoke to them as only I can do.  
It was just at this juncture that I stood up, stretched  
and made my way to the noise I heard.  
I was half minded what to do with him,  
and, as I arrived, he had broached his mission.  
The mandrake was too much for them,  
I don't know why they thought it worse  
than offering marriage to their daughters.  
Trouble began,  
the first stone flew across the air  
and struck me,  
then I half regretted being there.

We all started off in an instant,  
I saw Gargantua far along a street,  
open a door, and run inside the house  
Unluckily for all concerned,  
my hero made himself at home,  
professed affection for the daughter,  
locking her, and himself, upstairs.

Well, he must look after himself,  
and I left him, jumped the wall, swam the ditch,  
ran, right deep into a wood, and slept.

Next morning—how absurd it seems that I should share their  
little day,—  
I started off, at sunrise, for the West ;  
but not before I'd climbed a tree  
and listened for Gargantua's voice  
to crack the stillness and the earthen bowl.  
In vain.

Doctor Donne we parted from across the stream,  
and now we chase his feet along the bank.  
For a time he saw Gargantua across the river  
as he wobbled in and out among the trees and bridges.  
I've lost the reins, we three are separate,  
it often happens in such hilly country.  
You can shift for yourselves, I confess myself,  
I would sooner than not be out of your way.  
I've made no speeches, told no fortunes,  
but, as far as I can, I'll watch your feats.

Donne walked on till daylight fled  
and thoughts of sleep came into his head,  
while he watched the starry sky  
till a sudden spark lit up his memory.  
Walking the world to net a falling star—  
and yet the gold he sought now found him sleeping.  
He heard far voices, feared no danger,  
and knew they were not plotting for his elixir.  
The fruit they look for, hangs from trees  
and drops, to lift an echo from the hollow mines  
whose gold they wash in water, and subdue with fire

before they let it smile upon the sun.

“ But mine,” thought Donne, “ shines out from the nets, grows plumper, shielded from the worrying winds that float like birds to peck my fruit ; and all the wires, the yielding scales, the nets that give for growing, are of better gold. If I could catch an apple as it falls away, I should not need to dig and find my treasure.” This is Donne ; you’ve heard Gargantua preach his mission from my pulpit, and I have sketched the speeches I’ve intended. If Donne is precious, then Gargantua is prudish. I left Gargantua locked in with the daughter, and now we spy on Donne who counts the glittering stars. He numbered more than the biggest lapful, forgot his counting, and drifted into sleep : not far away Gargantua slumbers, fondling the girl he kidnapped, who enjoyed his violence. All of them asleep, and so was I.

How did Gargantua escape disaster ?

Waking in the morning, much refreshed and young, Gargantua’s stratagems took shape again.

“ You are my daughter, and my wife, in one ; I shall tell the people of my God-like find.

The child of your parents with an added grace, my holy paternity is also yours : if their conception, it was my idea.

You shall be my priestess ; they shall pray to you.

And all the while beneath this cloak,

I can come back again, a ball of lightning, and sleep away the pleasure of our holy meeting.”

Then he unlocked the door, and spoke outside.

Of course, in a moment they were at his mercy, grovelling and praying all along the street.

The father and the mother were the first to greet him, and when he claimed their daughter, they at once agreed.

“ I shall leave your daughter, till I call for her,”

and then he smiled on her, and shook hands with them both.

What can I do to pay Gargantua, make him suffer for his boldness ?

He ran downstairs, unbarred the door,  
bowed to the window, waved farewell.

“Remember the mandrake ; what I told you,  
problems it may help to settle.

I propose we leave your daughters,  
let your sons crusade with me.”

At his words the young men started,  
met outside the city walls ;  
bugles rang, sharp wind through leaves,  
the golden stars were gathered in the fields,  
they lay among the lawns and blessed the stillness,  
their mothers and their sisters bore the helmets, felt the  
plumes.

It touched me, and I nearly choked,  
felt I could cry to see them all ;  
any hint they act upon.

But Gargantua led them out,  
they worshipped him, forgetting me.  
A blast of a bugle, and they rose,  
took their helmets, shook the plumes,  
stood up in their glittering armour.

In front of them Gargantua rode,  
the apex of this arrow-head,  
the sharp beak of this hovering eagle  
that lingered over the far-flung plain.  
A river of stars to leap the rocks  
and net the hills with their wingless foam ;  
in front of them Gargantua rode  
tempting a meteor with his lance  
to drop on them and join its heat,  
sift it through the burning grain,  
to lie there for the waves to break  
and cool that mane of yellow sand.  
A lance that challenged topmost stars  
stood, the pinnacle, of this temple—  
Gargantua was helping Donne—  
but why he started on crusade  
except to help his own adventure,  
none of us knew, except Gargantua.  
Mine was now a queer position,

Doctor Donne was out of sight  
and Gargantua usurping  
the privilege I take from men.  
Out of sight ; but Donne could see  
the meteor dancing in cold space  
above Gargantua's boastful head.  
He saw it and he started off  
and ran to bask beneath its light.  
Dimly through leaves and down the shadowy valleys running,  
climbing to clear hilltops for a sight of dripping fire,  
not throwing like the tongue of fountains  
softening the ice-bound air  
but falling out of space and time,  
Donne could see his meteor, drop,  
plunge, try to pull back with ribbed wings,  
but fall faster,  
drop its control of speed,  
run through the winds, but not waver from their force,  
or stagger from their flow of rivers,  
blow forth the cloud as chaff  
from his fire breath of speed,  
then Donne looked for Gargantua's fusion,  
looked, listened, and waited long,  
and when his breath had come, went on again.

## A MARCH PAST AT THE PYRAMIDS

“Two parallel straight lines can never meet.”—*Euclid*.

“The brotherless Heliades, melt in such amber tears as these.”

*Andrew Marvell.*

THE door grates open. Two wild eyes look out.  
Reconnaissance. Until a readjustment  
of feathers, clothes, and gloves  
has made her ready for the street fighting.

Make way, malicious children !  
Stand back, until she finishes the steps  
And moves along the molten asphalt.

Throw down those cones of light  
which clothe a wall or tower !  
Stand free from them, strong buildings !  
As if the coat of shadows that you wear  
had fallen to your feet ;  
and with this gold reserve  
run down a gurgling river  
past the regimental flowers  
and close-cropped lawns,  
as far as where the flower beds  
and the pathways merge their stiff geometry  
into a simplified horizon.

The hundred-handed trees  
now wave their flags against her face,  
and she is sailing down the stream  
through every adverse current,  
and past the threatening shoals  
of unknown residents.

The carriages across the square  
will run you down the steepest roads  
and, for a slightly higher fare,  
will take you where no rust corrodes ;

along the breathless streets, that is,  
where deathless dowagers sustain  
the shadow of high life in Paris,  
and, in attempting it, constrain  
to leash wild Nature to their funeral car,  
and make the gay clouds float like kites,  
and wire the tall trees, bright as stars,  
for buttonholes, at awful rites.

Then why is it, that You must walk ?  
I see you, in imagination,  
drawn on the terraces where talk  
the shades who left us with elation,  
and, leaning on the carriage side,  
giants and dwarfs will point and shew  
the lakes on which the satyrs ride  
and hold the sails the zephyrs blow.

For in shy boats that float like birds  
the satyrs once again set out  
to find the fleece of golden herds  
now feeding in the woods to flout.

New argonauts—who now, at last,  
can see the trees, between the sails  
that hang upon their golden mast ;  
the trees that gleam like golden rails

are throwing the ripe fruit, down, down,  
till, from their skiffs, the satyrs hear  
the apples falling on the town  
below the clouds, as fleeces clear.

The fountains with their crystal whips  
are thrashing the teetotum dust  
on which the glistening branches of the trees  
drop down a coolness as she passes.

The simplified horizon is a fixture,  
it does not run before her  
like a hunted animal ;  
it does not leap down from the hills

and hide in the fierce green leaves  
whose lapping tongues  
drink in the rain of golden fire ;  
nor swim among the waves  
that spread their tails,  
shake forth their whirring wings  
and try to imitate the battlemented clouds  
running against the trumpet-throated wind.

Your mind is evidently set  
to reach the daily goal,  
the path's end,  
where you turn again  
and walk back home for lunch.  
So, while you chase this mean horizon  
of blank wall, I'll follow  
in your wake—a second shadow,  
with more evident intention.

In this net of changing paths  
and different views,  
giant figures loom like pointsmen in a fog  
setting the lines,  
directing the different phases  
and future happenings.  
While loud voices speak.

The man who built the pyramids  
discussing them with William Blake  
confessed the secrets of his Art,  
and shewed them, once for all, as fakes.

The light wind drifting down the road  
upon the scarce heard noises of the town  
breathes just as cool upon the woods and hills.  
It rests a little in the shimmering trees,  
then, while the dying sun unclasps his hair  
over the fresh fields and the gilded sea,  
it plays with the swaying cornland  
through those gold moving pillars

under the falling fountains of ripe fruit,  
till the clear evening falls upon us all.

A natural clumsiness had always been  
my bar to progress  
until I conquered it by calculation.

I made a poor Narcissus  
when I pored into the river,  
but in its smooth black mirror

I watched the meteor acrobats  
whose shining wings and fiery hair  
illumined the insensate air,

and in the straight lines of their flight  
among the archipelagos  
that glitter like a golden rose,

I saw the roads that never meet  
and on them those that never talk  
although together on their walk.

My natural clumsiness could not prevent  
more abstract knowledge, and an obvious bent  
for things that carry motion to a pitch  
where only calculation, with its stitch  
of make-believe, and taking things for granted,  
completes the web, and leaves the answer planted  
as strong as any fir tree hung with combs  
to drop like bombshells at whoever comes.  
My knowledge can hang nets to catch  
the flaming sparks that set the thatch  
alight above the floating towers,  
trembling to whiteness under bowers  
lit suddenly, and changed to gold,  
when the sun awakes and calls his fold.  
And when like gleaming jewels they lie  
and fill the webs with coloured sky,  
I hold some in my hand like fruit,  
and point to them and shew their suit

fiery with splendour and the green  
lawns on which the proud birds preen  
feathers more gorgeous in their glow.

But leagues above the cooling flow  
and running rivulets of wind,  
spanning the clouds, one foot behind  
resting upon the giant hills  
down which the sunlight runs its rills,  
the ideal pyramid will raise  
its pinnacle too proud for praise,  
that, like a diamond, writes a name  
across the skies, and gives me fame.

And so, while smaller men may make  
the soft singing and the golden shake  
with which the ripe fields greet the sun,  
into the joys for which they run  
tired lives into a broken mould,  
and then renounce the joy and fold  
crippled limbs, rehearsing in their mind,  
sights to remember when quick eyes go blind;  
I can reach above the crowd  
without a mask, without a shroud,  
and watch them counting grains of sand  
to tell the height my buildings stand.

I was the man who ran along  
a valley at the planet's song  
and guided by the golden chain  
that shone above a little plain,  
I reached the folds in which there slept  
the silent lambs the king had kept  
playing in the whispering air,  
until he cut their woollen hair.

Chosen as the delegate  
to represent our native race,  
I travelled in a caravan  
crossing hills unknown to man

until the song died, high in air,  
which told us that our end was there.

I was the wise man of the South  
and sang before the dragon's mouth  
his all inevitable doom :—  
and now, outside a wretched room  
fiery turbans paint the air  
and Babel tongues are loosened, where  
three running streams of races meet  
and lay their offerings at his feet.

Waving palm leaves toss the air  
in heavy spadesfull, falling where,  
like steam-engines, cathedrals rise  
to ring their bells within the skies.

Now who must take the precedence  
among the triple race of man  
collected at this mere pretence  
to show the seeds of providence ?

An African, from Mozambique,  
is ready at my right-hand side.  
Will he defeat the Jewish clique  
and reach there first, in righteous pride ?

On a platform in the square  
the local band confronts the air ;  
playing together, till they sound  
a note which sends the signal round.

Spontaneous gifts of homage, soon  
flooded the house and filled the road ;  
late-comers never knew the boon  
of bettered days, but bore the load

unpaid and prayerless through their lives ;  
wild honey, not yet in the hives,  
shall comfort those who cry alone ;  
their bed the sand, their food a stone.

“ Bow down ! ” his guardians say. “ Bow down ! ”  
their threatening wings shut in the town ;  
one human tribe obeys the call ;  
two others run beyond the wall.

Priority it is that counts,  
however high your incense mounts.  
At night the weeping stars combine  
to let their golden isles outshine

the waving fire before his throne.  
The springing flames obscure the groan  
of countless multitudes who pray  
to painted birds, or beasts of prey.

At the vast inspiring sound  
to which the tyrant god is crowned  
while the distant valleys hear  
the feet of those who run in fear ;

the anchorites who fill the caves  
and feed with satyrs, sing aloud ;  
they step into the surging waves  
and float to Heaven in the cloud.

The fountains with their crystal whips  
are thrashing the teetotum dust ;  
Mrs. X is walking in the crowd ;  
Mrs. Y is still outside the scrum.  
Now is the daily tournament at hand  
to prove the shouted statements of geometry.

The two come nearer ;  
will they touch, or bow ;  
or just fade back into infinity ?  
They are the actors in this drama ;  
blind are the crowd ;  
tamed Nature is an audience.

Mrs. X is ready with a smile  
and spreads a feathered dignity around her ;

Mrs. Y detests the common grass,  
the sun-scorched railings, and the folding chairs.  
And so they pass, and never bow,  
and Mrs. X folds up her trembling wings,  
to walk back sadly through the fading day

To show what might have been  
to failing eyes ;  
gold towers are building far above the sea,  
and many suns are dangling in the trellises ;  
while little waves run in  
and shake their cooling snow  
against the shadeless sand.  
The windows in the gilded towers  
have generous trees to shade them ;  
from their branches  
float down singing birds  
to lie asleep upon the sills  
like ready instruments  
whose strings you pluck  
when, through the dappled air,  
down in the jewelled orchards,  
where ripe tumbling fruit  
and shimmering dew  
are dancing to the silver sound  
the Man who built the Pyramids  
advances, leading on each arm  
one of the changeless parallels  
that grace the cylinders of History.

## THE NEPTUNE HOTEL

ARCHITECTURE, flowers' device  
A of tricks to play upon the sun,  
building frail palaces that tempt him  
filled with potentates for him to tumble,  
playing with his image in the shrine.

A device of flowers to draw him down  
and make him walk their golden roofs,  
shaking thin walls with force of his fiery wind,  
and when he goes in at the palaces  
to scatter the pollen for his wind to carry.

Here are houses built above the fields  
quite near to gardens of such growing strength  
their harvest wrestles with the wandering wind,  
but I stand to talk of the houses that lie  
and shine like lilies in the gentle foam.

Here is the Inn of the sea-god Neptune,  
these are the walls he allows to stand,  
wide flung windows answer to the waters  
yielding a horizon at the ocean's edge ;  
the edge of the world lies easy there.

You need not climb the haughty hills  
to gaze across the emptiness that lies beyond ;  
from every floor, through each bright window  
the bar of horizon shows along the sea,  
proudest garden wall of any secret God.

Step out carefully, the dazzling lights  
are manifold messages from unseen stars  
 piercing the ocean as it flows away  
 to wash bleached sands on untrod shores  
 quite near to gardens of the growing stars,

where they reach to fullness, plump their gilt  
and when the blossoms are about to open  
leaving the soft beds of conception

laid under arches of cool-shielding trees  
to shadow the loving limbs that gendered them,

they spread full flowers against the azure night,  
and some of them are messengers who run across  
the high blue hills an hour before the new-born day,  
others shine still like loud birds in trees,  
or fish with gold lines in the wavering sea.

Over the water full domes float high,  
their airy bubbles moored by the wind  
to gleam with wine dropped from his cups  
by the giant who feasts in a spotless Heaven  
and loads us with light.

His beams dart down and stab the waters,  
he walks on lattices across the waves,  
I see them out in the farthest ocean  
dry their manes ; I hear the tritons  
gathering over the liquid plain.

They sound their conches ; some come swimming,  
they gurgle and they leave a wake,  
and when the snowy foam is melted  
out of the depths with a bound there comes  
one who left his mine of jewels,

and rolled his stones to a shining heap,  
there are no robbers in his world,  
as in our world, there are no woods,  
no centaurs watching out of their caves  
who breathe a sharp wind from the cliffs.

But even now, not long ago  
our sails were flapping in an island's shade  
and I heard the centaurs under the hills  
trying the pipes of the wind-wrecked sailors  
till a wind more feeble than their fluting came.

We have no grapes for the satyr's fist  
to pluck from the vines and stain his skin,

no wide fields to run over and carry  
a stolen girl to the waterpools  
where they sleep in the flickering shade ;

conches are the pipes of Venice,  
our forests are the moving waves,  
they are the woods, the lakes, the fields,  
the vineyards trellised from stout trees  
over the running gold of the sea.

There lie the fields where the tritons gather,  
they sing in the shade and they dance together,  
a breath of wind, and the shivering waves  
are fountains under the trees  
and a waterfall down the hot lawns.

Here is the Inn of the sea-god Neptune,  
here are the walls he allows to stand,  
the windows open on the vineyards,  
fruit of the waves, itself in water,  
cool for the thirsty, lies at your hand.

The lips of night and the strings are silent,  
the sleeping sun is alive again,  
he walks on lattices over the waves,  
the tritons lay the bridge for him  
and work to the sound of their haughty conches.

Over the islands he rests a moment  
to drop the seeds that reach to flowers,  
if the sea birds will but carry them,  
the fields of snow will sing with lilies  
and the sharp blue hills be robed in fire.

Now like a sailor against the canvas  
he shows in the ropes and the latticed web,  
the clouds, like birds from hot lands, are around him,  
he opens the cage that they travel in  
and they spread their wings through the air.

They feel the wind with their sails  
and they flash keen wings in its breath,  
then, as he calls them  
singing, they fill utter space  
and the bars that imprison them, echo their song.

Now the sun is right on us,  
he stands and he raises his spear,  
while he hovers to bless us  
the towers, those tubes of loud music,  
loosen their tongues.

The wind runs fresh to their lips  
and they tremble with force of their song  
through stems that now shake with their flowers  
from the utmost petal in air  
to the lake that they float on.

Iron tongues that talk as a hammer  
are loosed and speak from the air,  
the molten morning is ordered,  
its metal runs to the word  
and silence is born to loud bells.

The tubes are hushed, those bells are mute,  
they close loud lips, they bow their heads,  
the coming of the new-born light  
is seen in silence, over the waves  
that live and die, and are live again.

For they raise their crests and their eyes are fire  
till they fall like snow with the wind,  
but once more they shake proud plumes in the air,  
and rising again through the clouds  
the towers are tubes of solemn music.

Blown by the wind and strung with bells,  
live from cool lips and hung with flowers,  
the breath of living is free within them,  
rays of sun, warm fingers, will pluck them,  
and the stops of their song will be touched once more.

My windows showed the islands  
striding on stilts through the sea,  
they called to one another with their bells  
and the foam sang low beneath the windows.  
I looked for gardens and the cool of trees,  
but I knew that the scent came out at night  
not from such, but from the leaves of stars  
and the whirling cataracts of fire-like water.

I see light on far roofs, a sheaf of arrows,  
the barbs have stuck, but the plumes still quiver,  
they hold to their points but shake their crests,  
those birds on lawns that the dew conceals.  
More arrows fall out of a cloud,  
and as the waves draw from the sand  
lion bodies grow lithe and are strong  
and the waves draw back from their might.

Our hours are as shells upon the sand,  
they sing for the waves to wash them with snow ;  
our fields of sand are yellow as the corn,  
their lips as thirsty for the melting cloud,  
and the waves will run up to them,  
sing at our windows,  
drop their snow before the growing islands.

God must be dead who walked upon the waters  
and made men wonder at His march ;—  
A new way among cities, an end to the gods  
that men may inhabit a harder world,  
but keep the gods living to mock at them,  
laugh at their idleness waiting a prayer.

A harder world without a God to catch us  
when we drop from a scaffolding, fall from our web  
and cannot spin a rope of silk  
up which to clamber to the clouds again.  
But the gods stand still like a statue in a garden,  
and our laughter is heard, while they smile and are dumb.  
Sooner than pray, we will grant our prayers  
and give to ourselves the gifts we ask.

I will sound a trumpet over the plains of sea  
to light the torches for the evening feast,  
the fruit that dangles through the clouds will shine  
and be our galaxy of shimmering lights.  
In boats that hover like a bird they come  
and climb to the terraces that feel the wind ;  
some have lived over the sea on white wings  
cool and high as the cliffs,  
and they feel as free again above the waves.

Before the morning comes to us again  
we can build through the darkness.  
Myself, if I could pave the lakes,  
I'd run their waters past my walls,  
sloping the valley for their running feet  
to send them faster till they gather strength  
to climb the paths I've laid for them.  
They shall run down to gather strength  
and the flight of their speed shall carry them up ;  
the boats shall set their sails with the current,  
they shall tremble with the eagerness of all the waters ;  
as they strain and make their race,  
the sun shall come out walking on the waves,  
his feet shall climb the mighty stairs  
and pass them, treading with majestic speed ;  
he shall be the first to reach  
that terrace where the city stands,  
before the waves and the clattering ships  
stand still in the harbour.  
Are we not proud to make the sun  
climb to us bowing with his beams  
to reach our height and stay an instant  
before he climbs his secret tower ?  
The ships now furl their sails  
gliding to the busy quays,  
but the waves run on to the shore and sound  
as loud as bells that ring in the trees,  
or whirl their song through clouds  
that move with the wind and are light as leaves.

The walking of the men across the bridges, down the alleys,  
has not the march of soldiers, or the feet of dancers,  
but is the roll of waters, the balanced tread of sailors,  
who cross the shaking hills of sea under every wind and sky.  
Now at this time to mock the falls,  
the fountains and the singing birds  
that make soft beds for love in the gardens on the land,  
voices run out of the boats and sing  
on the laughing water under the windows.  
The lutes are like fat hulls of ships,  
their rigging and the shrouds are strings,  
they are quite easy to the sailors,  
but to the minds behind the windows  
these lutes are as the fruit on trees,  
the shaking strings are the leaves that hide  
and draw the hand behind their shade  
to feel the hidden bounty ;  
and if this fruit was in their nets  
to pay the players they would part the meshes,  
let the tired hands touch and feel  
those hills of snow they hide with love.  
They'd slake their thirst and sing again,  
although they cannot reach the fruit  
their songs like birds can hover there  
and peck it when the wind will help,  
lifting the leaves, while making louder  
each fall of song to drown the flutter  
of hovering wings that linger to steal.  
Then, when a curtain lifts, there drops  
a ladder of light to the shadowed water  
and time and space are born to climb ;  
there is a moment to cross the sill  
and lift the nets and take the fruit.

Thus was the cool night tempered with fire ;  
the tritons woke again and felt the wind,  
they watched most tensely how it shook and played  
running among the glittering leaves of spray  
till they knew the strength that the clouds must fight  
setting their sails to profit by the force,  
and now they waited for the sun to come ;

the hour of cockcrow blared through the fields,  
the shadows rose at the creaking call  
and left their task like workers in the dusk.  
This crowing through fierce trumpets  
rang more often from each valley,  
was a beacon on each hill and a spear before each door ;  
heavy curtains fluttered with no wind,  
the stones upon the mountains creaked like tombs.  
Silence lay upon the plains till a spark  
flickered through the darkness, and a trumpet rang  
answering the far sound dwarfed by distance.

Then with his plumes more brilliant than the birds  
the crest of the sun showed under the plain  
as he climbed from the worlds where he strutted through our night  
and the fanfare rang still louder from the hills.  
His crest and then his comb came out,  
feeling the chill air like any fowl  
he creeps out from his barn into the cold :  
He lifts his fiery feathers and the stars die out.

I built through the night and now I frame the day,  
and make a Paradise for all the hours.  
The waves are woken like the sleeping fields  
by cockcrow voices loud and urgent,  
giving out shrill orders on the serenading wind :  
the flags upon the masts rap out commands.

We will send out ships upon the molten sea,  
to cut through the foam and charge into the clouds ;  
the sailors in the rigging will be wet with mist,  
and the wind stand still like eagles in the air.  
The people must be servile, must obey like sailors,  
clanking and hoarse are the cranes from much work.  
At the sound and sight of coming plenty  
the changing currents of the air will sing ;  
such are the scenes I focus on the wind.  
It shall be a beauty that cannot be collected.

Turn up the lights and open wide the shutters,  
this shall be a beauty never seen in brothels !  
The power of wine, the fire of Dionysus

kindling a flame through the black woods of night  
shall wear its garlands in deserted roads ;  
the statue in the garden shall be dyed with that blood.  
The shapes that stagger through their bones will shake  
and drop their wisdom like the Indian trees  
that sleep in the sun and at night are fountains  
melting to spice the metal of their flame :  
now they can enter the bright lit houses  
armed with guile to silence laughter.  
Here are gathered the shuttered beams,  
the lines of light that break before they shine :  
these are the parasites among the trees  
with brighter leaves to give the birds their life,  
gilding the robbery with stolen fire.  
At the first sign of surrender,  
first longing for soft couches and mild air  
with little waves to play with like soft lambs ;  
leaping lions shall be loosed  
to fall like fire down the fields  
and run among the houses and quiet gardens ;  
as soon as the ships lie still on the sea  
and the sailors land and walk the islands,  
bathe in a lake and lie beneath the trees,  
start their twanging music,  
their boats will prance like horses in a field,  
and the wind shall sound the trumpets of battle.  
The trumpet drifted down the woods,  
it rattled only the youngest leaves,  
then it swam through the sea and creaked among our towers.

Ring sea-halls with loud music,  
load your shells with the echo of the waves,  
at the sound of this horn  
the tritons shudder,  
and windows tremble in the water castles.

The genius comes like a cloud from the distance,  
a sudden growing in the fields of space,  
the meteor burns  
and the stars are blind,  
the net of numbers holds but one.

They drag the sea and feel the void,  
but it comes of itself  
and is not found ;  
the fire will burn without a flame,  
the waters flow without a source.

The water and the fire will melt  
and make a lodestar in the air,  
a floating island,  
driven clouds,  
all space contracted to one tower.

The tritons breathe again and bring  
their tribute over the snow-bound hills ;  
they reach the calm  
and leave the foam  
gliding swiftly, proud and eager.

Domes rise out of the waves, they gleam  
and show smooth limbs and shining hair  
with music sounding out of their throats :  
swim nearer, tritons, see the quays  
and climb the steps to the floating islands.

They clamber up the steps and crawl,  
slipping on the rain-smoothed marble,  
one of them drops his pearls,  
they shine  
the spray of fountains falling through the sun.

They had their audience and were fed,  
calling hoarsely  
one to another,  
at night each laid his conch aside  
and slept half into the fountain's brim.

This was the tribute of the sea, but now  
the sailors open cages from hot lands.  
Out fly the birds  
and sing to the sun,  
they fill the clouds and echo in the rain.

The clouds can wander among the hills,  
they lose themselves like light in a forest :  
they sing bird-songs to the sun,  
his winds  
will hurry them forth, and drive them home.

To the sun, his clouds are soft as birds,  
their voices cooler than the waterfalls ;  
they give him shade  
and speak his word,  
they shield him with their painted sails.

They fly to us, their crests as turbans  
with liquid tongues that babble water,  
their wings are leaves,  
their words clear springs :  
they bring these gifts from an anchored world.

This is a town that floats, no woods  
can cool us with their waving shade,  
but the birds that cling  
to a gliding ship  
can flash in the sun and sing to us.

Our domes and towers are sails or smoke,  
we float while other stars are still,  
they sing their homage  
in our wake,  
and follow through the melted waves.

The waters are more smooth than lawns,  
they have a drifting dappled shade ;  
the web of shadow  
lifts and falls,  
it flashes and it fills the net.

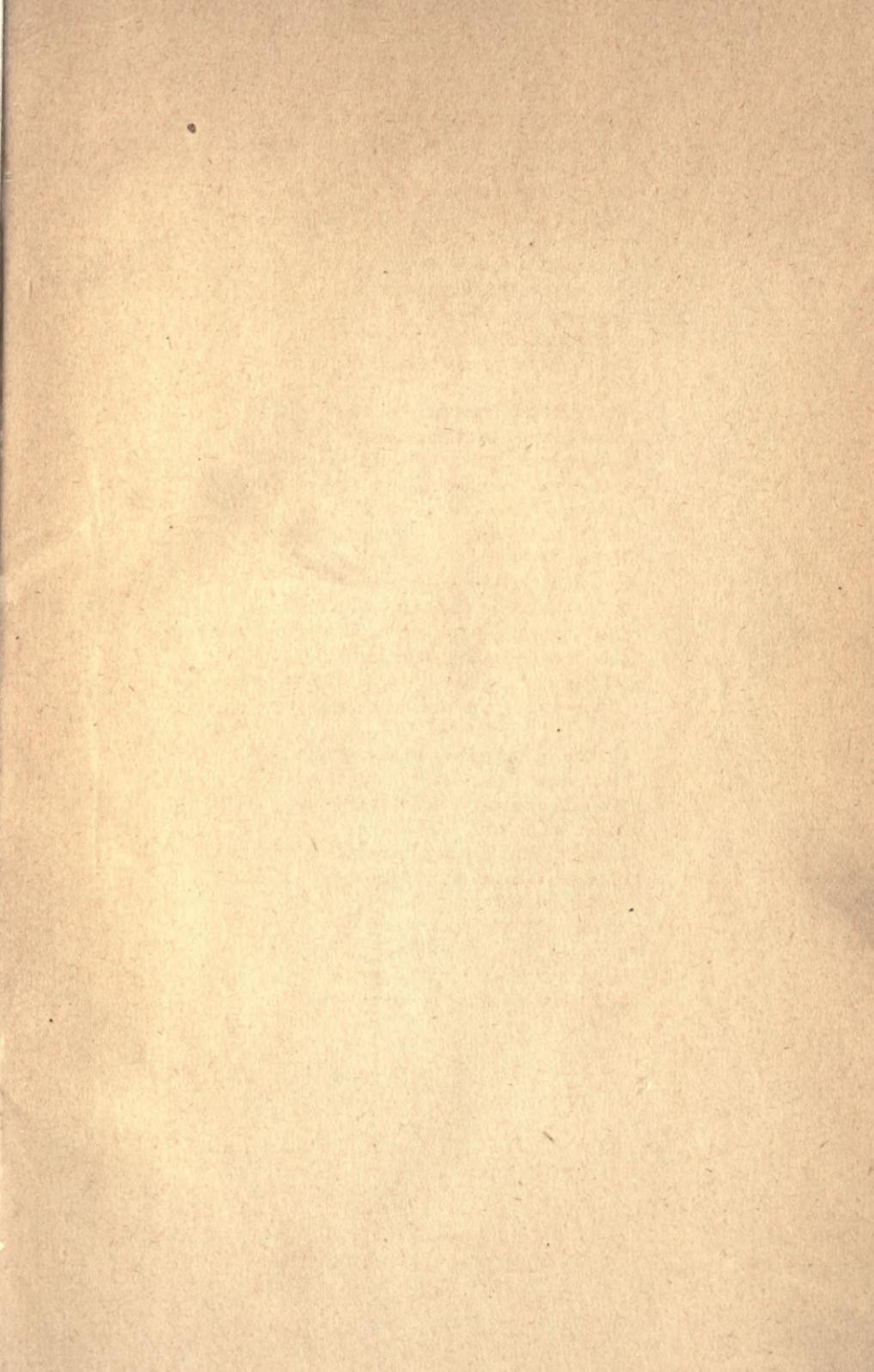
The daring few who cross the fields  
are meshed and snared by the laughing leaves,  
the clouds and waves  
will hide and drown,  
the net will drag their corpses in.

The bodies are renewed by fire  
that tempers them and burns them clean,  
the breath of speech  
swells in their lungs,  
they live again and laud the flame.

A choir of tritons floats between  
the city and the sloping plain,  
they hear the sailors  
sing from their ships  
and hush their horns to hear the praise.

Now are built the bridges  
to walk firmly to the future.  
No longer shall they trust themselves  
to the fickle sea that changes with its moods,  
or hang reliance on the wind  
till the hand of an enemy takes the reins.  
More swift than men on horses  
they shall be the shepherds  
to the flocks of cloud and the folds of sea,  
to send them out to pasture, and to fence them in.  
I see them open the watergates  
till a gentle rain comes down from its forest  
to play among the lawns and fields.

Unstop the towers again, sound forth  
their music down the whirring wind !  
It shall run apace and reach us  
where we lie with idle sails.  
In the sudden foam there breathes  
a coolness that gives life again,  
the city shows above the sea,  
increases from its couch of snows  
until the domes, like flowers, break out,  
the fire of music fostered them  
and raised them in the fields of sea.





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